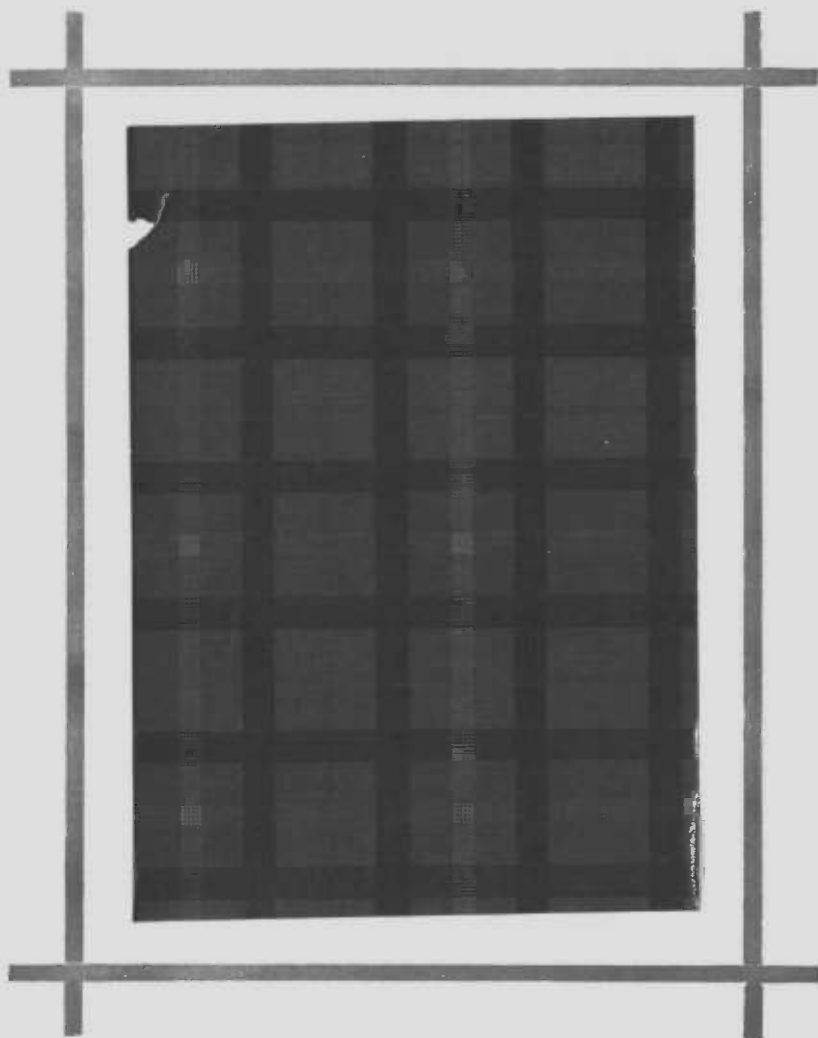


# The Gunns.



GUNN TARTAN

# THE GUNNS

BY

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## PREFACE.

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**D**ISTINCT notice is necessary that only fragmentary materials for the history of the Gunns are here offered. Demand was made locally some time ago to treat the subject, and opportunities then at the British Museum library and elsewhere, led to the composition of a considerable quantity of MS. The subsequent knowledge that others have expended special study on the theme made it impossible to go further, if there were not additional reasons, such as the inconvenience for research of foreign residence. Two or three who have lineage and other rights to deal with the Gunns, it is now known, have been much engaged in collecting historical facts ; and the purpose of publication of this sketch is merely to add, if possible, to their stores, and to create some popular

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interest for the greater things to come, without "forestalling their market." It will be seen that there is no pretension to write a history of the so-called clan, but only wish to aid towards this desirable result. Swansons, Mansons, Hendersons, Davidsons, Georgesons, Donaldsons, Rorisons, Sandisons, Gaunsons, Williamsons, Robertsons, Johnsons, and others being of the same blood as the Gunns, the appeal is wide. Maternal relationship to the first-named of these Teuton families, may save the implication of being quite an interloper in a field sacred perhaps to the sennachies of those practically forming the majority of the Caithness population. There has long been expectation of the work of a contemporary official of the clan, in the form of a history; Mr John Gunn, naturalist, is busy and greatly interested in collections of similar purpose; Principal Miller of Madras, as being half Gunn, was, and perhaps still is, gathering materials for a book on the subject; while the Rev. Alexander Gunn, Watten, has collected notes for forty years on the earlier

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periods of the family's annals. When the knowledge of these extensive preparations was discovered, it paralysed anything like an attempt at a thoroughly digested narrative; and what is now given, if it may have much local interest, must be looked on as stones from the quarry and not the built house. It is satisfactory to think that the Rev. Alexander Gunn has "succeeded in tracing an unbroken line of eldest sons from the year 690 to the present time, with a great many collateral branches. The information is good from 690 to 1236, the year in which the first of the Gunns landed in Caithness, because they came both by the father's and mother's side through the line of the Norse earls of Orkney. Snaekel, the first who arrived, was undoubtedly heir to the earldom, and would have had it, were it not that he was deprived of it by the king of Norway for having a hand in the assassination of Earl John, the last of the Norse earls, who was slain in Thurso in 1232. The story of the earls has been recorded by many histories and sagas. The period between 1236 and

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1454 is very barren of materials, and from 1454, or 1478, to the present time, Sir Robert Gordon and tradition are the principal sources of information." That such prolonged and accurate study will soon take book shape is extremely to be wished. It may whet the appetite to have something slighter, as a forerunner to one or all of these coming more exhaustive and regular works. Anything like elaboration into chapters or other formal divisions would not suit the character of these preliminary gatherings.

FALMOUTH, 1890.



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## THE GUNNS.

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IN his "Caithness Family History" Henderson has given one of the latest accounts of the Gunns ; and though he declared that a detailed notice of the clan was beyond his scope, his four pages are a valuable addition to the considerable quantity of literature on the subject. The Hendersons being of the same male lineage, it may safely be assumed that what information was submitted has all the accuracy possible. He refers to Sir Robert Gordon and other writers for full account, and refuses to enter into the controversy as to whether the origin of the Gunns was from Gunnus, brother of Sweyn, the Freswick viking, or from Guin, son of Olave, king of the Isle of Man. He assumes that they are of Norwegian descent, and were settled in Caithness at a remote date. Their connection with Caithness as a distinct clan ended about 1619. What tenure of land they had must have been held by the sword, as none of their charters are dated before 1650. In the fifteenth century George was the chief, living at the Castle of Harberry in Clyth. He was the coroner of the county, and wore a large silver brooch.

as his badge of office in the sovereign's interest. Of his seven sons four fell with himself in 1464 in a combat with the Keiths. "James succeeded to the chieftainship; Robert, the second son, is ancestor of the Gunns of Braemore and other families; from John, the third son, are descended the Gunns of Dalemor and Dale, and others; Henry, the fourth son, is the traditional ancestor of the Caithness Hendersons; and William, the fifth son, of the Williamsons and Wilsons." In 1464, he says, James, William, and Henry, retired into Sutherland, the chiefs having their mansion at Killearnan, in Kildonan, till it was burnt by an accidental fire in 1690. References are given to the well-known "Inventory of the goods of Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath," of date 1456, in which mention is made of Alexander and Henry, sons of the coroner, as owing various debts to this Sutherland, father-in-law of William of Roslin, earl of Orkney, and first earl of Caithness of the Sinclair name. The context is, "Also, Alexander Gunn, the coroner's son, owes me for the teinds of Dale, Thurso, and the River, with other goods that he took of mine, what comes to 24 merks upwards. Also, Henry Gunn, the coroner's son, owes me for teinds and cattle which he took of mine 11 merks upwards as victual was sold at that time in the county." John Gunn has, in 1664, a written lease of Braemore from George, the earl whom Glenorchy circumvented, at a rent of £490 Scots; and by some mistake it is said that in 1664 he had a wadset over that estate for 1000 merks from John, earl of Breadalbane. It must be 1684, for there was no such earl created as soon as 1664. This

date is the more probable because Henderson thinks John lived till 1698, as his son and successor George is designed then, in a tack of Dirlot, "younger of Braemore." In 1715 George Gunn had another tack of Braemore from Lord Glenorchy, reserving "the salmon fishings with the deer and roe," and in the same year he obtained a wadset for 3000 merks. This must be a little wrong again, for the Earl of Breadalbane, who had been Lord Glenorchy, was then alive. It can hardly mean his son John, and the explanation of these slips may be that the two titles were mixed by the compositor in printing. In 1732 George Gunn had a wadset from Sir James Sinclair of Dunheath upon Braemore for 17,000 merks, Sir James having bought it in the division and sale of the Caithness estate by the second Earl of Breadalbane, it is said here in 1729, but really in 1718. The descent of these Gunns of Braemore is given down to Sir George Gunn Munro of Poyntzfield in Cromarty, this Munro being the son of Rev. John Munro of Halkirk, who died before the middle of the eighteenth century. John's wife was Janet Gunn, daughter of the Braemore George mentioned. Till 1793, from 1752, these Munroes held the property. Though, or because, personally related, Henderson seems to have been not only less full, but more perfunctory, in his account of the Gunns than of any of the Caithness families; but this was perhaps also for the reason that the Gunn affairs had become somewhat hackneyed, through various versions of Sir Robert Gordon's original narrative. There is, however, a great deal of new substance now of which there is no hint in this prejudiced historian, though

it will remain true that he must be the greatest authority till his time on the doings of the clan.

It might easily be debated whether these brave Norsemen had any real grounds to be named, or misnamed, a clan. There was not about their actions the special character that might draw very close comparisons with the Celtic clan system. The word clan came by use to have an application not much wider than a family surname; and those who wish to understand the broils of Caithness, Sutherland, and Strathnaver will do well to notice this. Even among the Celtic Mackays there were a dozen clans in the sense that the word is applied to the Gunns. Every ambitious man set up a new so-called clan, and thus there are of the Gunn male lineage itself clans Henderson, Wilson, Williamson, Manson, not to mention more. In the fourth volume of the Privy Council records (1585-1592) there is a satisfactory explanation of the real condition of things. What may be technically called a bastard or illegitimate kind of clan began to be prevalent, which preferred blood relationship to lordship or landlordship. Division of a genuine clan like the Mackays, Macdonalds, or Campbells went on till the great chief had to use the skill of an emperor to conciliate all the little chiefs of his own legitimate rule. Of the Mackays, there were the clans Abrach, Morgan, Thomas, John, Paul, and no one knows how many more. It was the same principle at work among the Gunns which made them both formidable to their neighbours and fatal to themselves, quarrels of family kind often having outside results of the fiercest savagery against

interference of strange kin. The situation positively manufactured feuds of the most sanguinary character. In July, 1587, there was appended to an act of parliament two rolls with significant titles :—1st, “The roll of the names of the landlords and bailies of the lands dwelling on the Borders and in the Highlands where broken men have dwelt and presently dwell ;” 2nd, “The roll of the clans that have captains, chiefs, and chieftains upon whom they depend, often against the wills of their landlords, as well on the Borders as Highlands, and of some special persons of branches of the said clans.” Belonging to the first list were, among others, the names of the Earl of Sutherland, the Earl of Caithness, the Earl Marshal, Lord Oliphant, the lairds of Bucholly or Freswick and of Dunbeath, and “Mackye of Far.” In the latter list the Border clans are designated by their surnames, as the Johnstons, the Armstrongs, and so on ; but the Highland clans have the variety of calling themselves sometimes by first names, after the Celtic manner. The clan Gunn is not mentioned, which shows that in 1590, when these rolls were written, they had not the character of a national but of a local clan. It must therefore be always kept in mind that even the Killernan chief of the Gunns was, on Celtic principles, a small man, though on Norse considerations the leading Gunns were the superiors of all their Gaelic neighbours. Their misfortune was trying to be what they were not in mind or body. Norsemen talking Gaelic was one of the many anomalies of those mixed times. They ought not to have passed for their right growth the Norse boundary,

which Dr. Joseph Anderson says is indicated in Caithness by "Norn" Calder and South Calder as place names. But in such things fate is stronger than foreknowledge. As the Normans learned English after their conquest of this island, so the Gunns became familiar with Gaelic. But it did not affect their physical and mental nature to the core. It is clear that the reason why the Gunns are not to be met with in any of the ancient records, charters, or other similar documents, is because they had not landed position. Holding their estates by the sword is a rhetorical illusion. The vigour of law was too all-penetrating in old times, even where disorders occurred. It is often not understood that the very excess and minuteness of the old feudal and clan laws caused some of the fiercest quarrels. No man could hold an inch of soil by his sword, and this explains why only a few of the Gunns reached even the position of underholders, Killernan itself being only an appanage of the Gordons' estate. The coroner in holding Ulbster was probably the nearest to a landlord of all the Gunns. It was as tacksmen or underholders that they gained their best respect, which was practically the only field open at all then to popular ability and energy. Indeed, this also was shut except to relatives; and only the most distinguished services, usually of a fighting kind, allowed the admission of a strange or plebeian element among the feudal or clan rulers. Historians know all this, and more of much the same tenor; but ordinary opinion is apt to be led astray by speech about the chief of this or that clan, as of the Abrachs or Gunns. It does the best justice to the latter to see

them as they were—one of the bravest but, when without organization, one of the most helpless sections of the Norse population that crossed from the Orkneys on the career of conquest. How the Mackays massacred them at Harpsdale, Downreay, and at “The Chase of Sandside,” shows that they needed the aid and guidance of the southern Sinclairs, who were skilled in the culture and knowledge of their time. These, as the rulers of Orkney and Shetland since 1379, knew the quality of bravery in the Gunns; and after they became earls of Caithness, there were no more Gunn disasters. The battle on Tannach moor in 1464 of the Gunns under the coroner, against the Keiths with the aid of the Mackays of Strathnaver, was the last considerable defeat of those Caithnessmen. It was shortly after this time that the first Sinclair took up residence in the county—William, the second earl of the name. He married a daughter of the head of the Keiths, but the Gunns soon came under his allegiance, being largely his tenants, and thereafter, for more than a hundred years, they had success and prosperity in peace or fight. It will be seen how it became with them after they grew disaffected to Caithness and its legitimate rulers. As the coroner was the deputy of William Sinclair, earl of Orkney and Shetland, lord of Roslin, and first earl of Caithness, and might not be too willing to give up his importance on the appearance of William, the second earl, in the county, the latter may have sympathised with the Keiths and Mackays at Tannach; but if he did, he soon changed this attitude towards the Gunns, his new people. From the Privy



Council records of 1582, it can be gathered that they were then still loyal to the earls of Caithness ; for when George the fifth earl claimed the justiciaryship which the previous earl held, Lord Oliphant objected that giving him this hereditary office "would in effect take the Oliphants' lands within Caithness from them, and make their places to be possessed by the clan Gunn and others contrary to law and reason."

After these preliminary explanations, it will be appropriate to give what the Rev. Charles Thomson took out of Dr. Patrick Brodie Henderson's MSS. in 1841 about the Gunns, of whom Henderson was a distinguished representative:—"The clan Gunn are said to have originated in the twelfth century, within the parish of Wick, where they once were very powerful and still are very numerous. About the year 1100, Olaf, a man of great bravery, dwelt in the isle of Graemsay, one of the Orkneys. He had three sons—Waltheof, Gun, and Swen. From the second of these, traditionally called the great Gunn of Ulbster, where he dwelt, the clan Gunn deduce their descent.

. . . . About the year 1464 serious disputes having arisen between the Keiths and the clan Gunn, Keith of Ackergill associated with himself the Mackays of Strathnaver, who readily entered into the quarrel, and marched against his enemies. The hostile parties encountered each other on the moor of Tannach, in the parish of Wick. A desperate conflict ensued, but, after a cruel slaughter on both sides, the Gunns were at last defeated. To terminate these bitter and bloody feuds, it was arranged that a meeting should take place, with twelve horsemen on each side,

between Keith of Ackergill and the coroner, as the chief of the clan Gunn was styled. This interview was appointed to be held in the chapel of St. Tears, not far from Ackergill. The coroner, with the greater part of his sons and principal kinsmen, to the number of twelve altogether, came at the time appointed; and as Keith had not yet arrived, they proceeded into the chapel to their devotions. Whilst they were at prayer, Keith of Ackergill came up with twenty-four men, on each horse two; and rushing on the coroner and his followers overpowered and slew them all, but not before the greater part of the Keiths had fallen. This horrid act of treachery did not pass unrevenged. William, the grandson of the coroner, afterwards intercepted and cut off George Keith of Ackergill and his son, with twelve of their retainers, at Drummoy in Sutherland. The lands of Ackergill passed into the possession of the Earl of Caithness." With this change, the Gunns became the loyal dependents of the earls for nearly half a century. In the usurping Mey earls' charter chest at Barrogill Castle there was a charter of Gillock and other lands by Laurence, Lord Oliphant, to George, the fourth earl, dated 7th May, 1550, and a sasine of Ackergill, Harland, Myrelandhorn, and other lands, on 28th July, 1550. The Keiths had Ackergill till later than 1538.

Another interesting paragraph of Thomson's is:—"An apparently monumental stone at Ulbster, on which are engraved some untraceable sculptures, is said to mark the grave of a Danish princess whom Gunn, the progenitor of the clan Gunn, married in Denmark. The vessel in which the great

Gunn of Ulbster returned home with his bride, was wrecked on the ironbound shores of Caithness, and the Danish princess was drowned."

The Rev. John Munro of Halkirk, the second of the same name, has this passage, in 1840, in his flowing and eloquent description of St. Magnus's chapel at Spittal or The Hospital:—"Here was the cemetery of the clan Gunn, at one time a powerful and a warlike race, who inhabited the mountainous parts of this county, as well as the Kildonan district of the Sutherland county, and who, notwithstanding the high mountains, the many mosses and morasses which intervene to render the journey tedious and laborious, are said to have carried their dead, especially the remains of their chiefs and principal men, from the glens of the Crask and Knockfinn in order to be interred in the chapel of Spittal."

Rev. William Findlater, the minister of Durness, has in 1834 a peculiar ethnological piece of observation:—"The principal clans in the parish are those of Mackay, Sutherland, Campbell, Morrison, and Gunn; the two former generally distinguished by fair hair and blue eyes, the Campbells and Gunns by dark eyes and dark complexion."

Of all accounts hitherto published about Gunns, it is probable that George Sutherland Taylor's is the most definite. He was a Golspie resident, and his views are supposed to be biased greatly by his friendship with the Sutherland Gunns, represented in 1840, when he wrote, by George Gunn, in Rhives, the chief, as he thought, of the clan. Though his

facts are disputed in many points, his statements cannot be overlooked in a field of investigation where much that is tangible cannot be realised from what records exist, these being always few and fragmentary. His narrative, as follows, will remain one of the best foundations for discussion of the origin, lineage, and history of the Gunns, and hardly the less that he is wrong again and again :—"The clan Gunn have at all times been considered throughout the north Highlands as descended from the Norwegian kings of Man; and Lochlin, the Gaelic name for ancient Scandinavia, or perhaps in a more limited acceptation for Denmark, is still named by the few natives of the Highlands who now recollect the traditions of their fathers, as the parent country of the Gunns, the Macleods, and the Gillanders. According to the 'Chronicle of Man,' published with Camden's 'Britannia' in 1586, Godfred or Godred, surnamed Crovan, and son of Harold the Black, of the royal family of Norway, was the first king of Man; and his sovereignty appears to have extended over a large portion, if not the whole, of the Western Isles. His reign is supposed to have commenced about the year 1077. The fifth king of Man from Godfred the first king, and descended from him, was Olave, who, succeeding his father when very young, was deprived of his kingdom by a natural brother named Reginald, and had the island of Lewis assigned to him. After severe and protracted struggles, Olave succeeded in recovering his kingdom, and died king of Man, in Peel Castle, 18th June, 1237. He had been thrice married, and by his third wife,

Christina, daughter of Farquhar, earl of Ross, King Olave had three sons, first, Guin or Gun, the ancestor of the clan Gunn; second, Leoid, Loyd, or Leod, from whom are descended the Macleods; and third, Leaundris, from whom were the clan Landers or Gillanders of Ross-shire, but many of this clan afterwards assumed the name of Ross. At this period the earls of Ross were very powerful in the north of Scotland; and besides being masters of the present district of Ross, they held extensive tracts of country in several parts of the west coast, and along the Caithness shores. The three grandchildren above named of Farquhar, earl of Ross, appear to have been provided for by that potent earl about the middle of the thirteenth century, Guin or Gun having been settled in Caithness, where the earl's authority at that period was considerable. Leod obtained Glenelg from him, and by marriage with the daughter of a Danish knight, Macraild Armine, also obtained Miginish, Bracadale, Durinish, Dunvegan, Lindell, Vaterness, and part of Troterness in the isle of Skye, while Leander settled in the midst of his grandfather's territories in Ross.

"The particular lands in Caithness which were originally acquired by the clan Gunn cannot at this distant period of time be satisfactorily traced; but the earliest castle or stronghold of their chief in that quarter was the castle of Halbury at Easter Clyth, or, as it is often called, Coroner Gunn's Castle, which, like almost all the other old castles in Caithness, was situated on a precipitous and nearly detached rock, overhanging the sea and, except at one side, surrounded by it.

“The clan Gunn continued to extend and occupy their possessions in Caithness until about the middle of the fifteenth century, when, in consequence of their deadly feuds with the Keiths of Caithness (who had obtained a settlement in that county by the marriage of one of the Keiths with Marion Cheyne, a Caithness heiress, in the fourteenth century), and with other neighbouring clans, the Gunns found it necessary to establish their chief and a strong detachment of the clan in the adjoining county of Sutherland, where they obtained the protection of the earls of Sutherland, and from them got possession of several lands in the parish of Kildonan and elsewhere.

“The history of the clan during these early centuries, as collected from tradition and partly borne out by detached narratives in Sir Robert Gordon’s ‘History,’ is replete with incidents which in the present age have more of the character of wild romance than of reality, and exhibits in many startling details the ferocity and implacable fury which distinguished the feuds of the clans in the remote Highlands, even down to near the close of the seventeenth century. Sir Robert Gordon, whose ‘History’ was written in 1630, thus alludes to the inveterate deadly feud between the clan Gunn and the clan Abrach, a branch of the Mackays:—‘The long, the many, the horrible encounters between these two tribes, with the bloodshed and infinite spoils committed in every part of the diocese of Caithness [Sutherland, Caithness, and Strathnavernia] by them and their associates, are of so disordered and troublesome memory’—that he passes them over.

“Lengthened narratives of these ancient feuds cannot be given, but one instance may be mentioned of the desperate manner in which they were conducted, by very briefly narrating the best traditional account that has been obtained of the following bloody and treacherous rencounter between the Keiths and the Gunns. The meeting of the parties and the slaughter of the Gunns are by Sir Robert Gordon stated to have taken place in St. Tyr’s Chapel, an old religious edifice on the sea-coast of Caithness, and on the walls of which he says the blood of the slain might be seen in his time ; but the tradition of the Highlands says that this perfidious affair occurred in the interior of the county and in the open air, in Strathmore of Caithness. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the chief of the clan Gunn was George Gunn, who lived in feudal dignity in his then impregnable castle of Halbury ; but he was better known as Coroner Gunn, or, as he was called by the Highlanders, *N’m Braistach-more*, from a great brooch which he wore as the badge or cognizance of his office of coroner. He had a deadly feud with the chief of the Keiths, and having met in St. Tyre’s chapel for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation, but without success, they there solemnly agreed to decide their quarrel, if they could not do so amicably, on a future day, by equal combat between twelve sons or relatives of each chieftain. This compact was concluded by mutual vows, accompanied with religious rites within the chapel, that the meeting would take place in a solitary part of the country where no interruption could occur, and the escort of each leader was fixed at twelve armed horse-

men. The coroner had been twice married, and had a numerous family of sons, but some of them resided in Sutherland, and it was also agreed that he should form his party there, and proceed into Caithness with them by the Strathmore route, while the Keiths would move on the appointed day towards the confines of Sutherland, and in the same direction, so that the two parties would meet in a retired district remote from any chance of being disturbed. The chiefs, each followed by twelve horses and their riders, came within sight of each other on the appointed route, and soon thereafter met at a burn called Altnagawn, below the Glut of Strathmore. The coroner and the leader of the Keiths approached each other in full armour, but it was soon discovered by the Gunns that there were two riders on every horse in the party of the Keiths, and consequently the latter party had twenty-four men opposed to the twelve followers of the coroner. This vile stratagem instantly revealed to the Gunns that their destruction by unfair means was determined upon. They scorned, notwithstanding the great odds against them, to retreat before their enemies the Keiths; and both parties dismounting, the huge double-handed swords, and other formidable weapons of the period used in close combat, were furiously and destructively wielded, amidst horrid imprecations and remorseless vows of each clan's never-dying vengeance, which raised to madness the rage of the combatants. The Gunns fought most desperately, but could not withstand the great odds that opposed them; and after a long-continued struggle, the survivors on both sides were so much exhausted that the



combat was mutually dropped; the Keiths being so far the victors as to leave the field with their banner displayed, and to be able to carry with them their slain companions, while in the ranks of the Gunns the coroner and seven of his party were killed, and the remaining five were all severely wounded.

“The Keiths proceeded to Dilred [Dirlet] Castle in Strathmore, then occupied by Sutherland of Dilred, where they were hospitably entertained. The five surviving Gunns, who were all sons of the coroner, also retired, but tarried at another stream, since then called Alt-Torquil after Torquil Gunn, one of the survivors, who there dressed the wounds of his brothers. Towards evening, Henry *Beg*, the youngest of the surviving brothers of the Gunns, proposed that they should follow the Keiths, and endeavour to obtain revenge, even by stratagem such as the Keiths had recourse to, but his brothers considered such a step as leading to their certain destruction. Henry, however, could not be restrained from his purpose, and swore that he never would rest until he should kill a Keith, and recover possession of his father’s sword, helmet, shirt of mail, and brooch of office, which the Keiths had taken off the dead body of the coroner. Two of the brothers were so severely wounded that they could not move to any great distance, but the other two accompanied Henry, who arrived at Dilred Castle soon after nightfall. On approaching the castle, its wooden windows or shutters were found open, and around a large fire in the lowest apartment the survivors of the Keiths were quaffing bumpers of ale; and Henry, who went close to one of the

windows, heard them narrate with boisterous delight the losses sustained by the Gunns. The chief of the Keiths, not apprehensive of any danger, accidentally approached the window where Henry stood, and the latter then bent his bow, and in another instant his arrow pierced the chieftain's heart, Henry at the same time boldly accompanying the deadly flight of his arrow with the exclamation, afterwards used in the north Highlands as a proverb, of 'The Gunn's compliment to Keith.' This tradition was obtained in Gaelic, and Henry's exclamation of *Iomachgar n 'Guinach gu Kaigh* is more emphatic in that language than in any translation of the words. The old chief dropped down dead; a panic seized the other Keiths; and the three Gunns, having darted forward to the door of the castle, slew some of the first persons who ventured out by it, but finding that they could not retain their position long, Henry and his two brothers retired silently under cover of the darkness of the night, and hurried back to the assistance of the other brothers, who had been unable to accompany them.

"The coroner thus killed by the Keith was, according to Sir Robert Gordon, 'a great commander in Caithness in his time, and was one of the greatest men in that country, because when he flourished there was no earl of Caithness, that earldom being still in the king's hands. Thereafter it was given to William Sinclair, the second son of William, earl of Orkney, by his second wife, which William, earl of Caithness, was slain at Flodden.' *Crowner, crownare, crounal*, according to Dr. Jamieson, was first an officer to whom it belonged to attach all

persons against whom there was an accusation in matters pertaining to the crown, and the distinction between the office of sheriff and coroner was anciently thus explained :—‘ All attachments pertain to the coroner where the accuser makes mention in his accusation of the breaking of the king’s peace ; otherwise, if he makes no mention thereof, the attachment pertains to the sheriff.’ Secondly, the coroner was he who had the charge of the troops raised in one county. The first certain proof of the existence of the office of coroner occurs in the reign of David II. The earldom of Caithness, at the period referred to by Gordon, may be said to have been in one respect in the king’s hands ; for although after the termination of the Norwegian line of earls of Orkney and Caithness in 1331, the earl of Strathern was also earl of Caithness for a short time, the succeeding earls of the Sinclair family claimed the Caithness title while they also held the earldom of Orkney under the kings of Denmark, and their allegiance to a foreign power divested them of their privileges as earls of Caithness under the crown of Scotland. This state of matters no doubt occasioned the establishment of a coronership in Caithness, which office was vested in the person of the chief of the Gunns, who was afterwards killed by the Keiths.

“ Five of the coroner’s sons survived him. The eldest, James, from whom the patronymic *MacKeamish*, ‘ the son of James,’ is derived, which distinguished his son and all the subsequent chiefs of the clan, succeeded his father, and resided in Sutherland, as all his successors have done, their principal dwelling-house

having been at Killernan, in the parish of Kildonan, until it was destroyed accidentally by fire about the year 1690. From one of the sons of the coroner, named William, are descended the Wilsons of Caithness, and from Henry the Hendersons. Another son, Robert, who was killed with his father, left issue, and from them were the Gunn Robsons, who afterwards appear in the annals of Caithness, while from the issue of another son, John, also killed by the Keiths, were the Gunns M'Ean of Caithness. It was in the time of this Coroner Gunn that Hugh Macdonald of Sleat, third son of Alexander, earl of Ross, married a lady of the clan Gunn, who is supposed to have been the coroner's daughter. 'By this lady, Macdonald of Sleat,' says Gregory in his "*Western Highlands and Islands*," had a son Donald, called Gallach, from being fostered by his mother's relations in Caithness, who afterwards became the heir of the family, and from whom the present Lord Macdonald is descended.' The fostering of the children of great families in remote but comparatively secure parts of the interior of the Highlands, was a very common practice in the north of Scotland down to the beginning of last century, and the alliance or affectionate tie thus formed often proved to be stronger than that flowing from blood relationship. Several formal agreements for the fostering of children are still preserved in the north; and the foster father, as well as the father of the child, make a gift of cattle which, with their whole increase, were to be kept as the property of the foster child until he arrived at man's estate.

"James Gunn was succeeded as chieftain by his son William,

with whom originated the patronymic of *Mackeamish*—i.e., 'the son of James.' William, the first Mackeamish, signalised himself in several conflicts in the north; and his fame as a successful and brave leader of his clan has been celebrated in some Gaelic verses and songs still existing. Alexander Gunn of Killernan was the second, and his son William Gunn the third Mackeamish. John Gunn of Killernan and Navidale was the fourth, and Alexander Gunn, also of the same designation, was the fifth Mackeamish. This last chief had two sons, Donald and George, and he was succeeded by his eldest son Donald, who was the sixth Mackeamish. Alexander Gunn, the son of Donald, was the seventh, and Alexander's son William Gunn the eighth Mackeamish; but this last chief being an officer in the army, was killed in action in India without leaving issue, and the other male descendants of Donald the sixth Mackeamish being extinct, the chieftainship devolved on the now deceased Hector Gunn, the great-grandson of George, the second son of Alexander the fifth Mackeamish, to whom he was served as nearest male heir on 31st May, 1803, and George Gunn, in Rhives, Sutherlandshire, the only son of the said Hector Gunn, is now [1840] the chief of the clan Gunn and the tenth Mackeamish.

"The name Gunn had been until the middle of last century spelt with one *n*, but since then a second *n* has been added in order to distinguish the name from the word 'gun,' a musket—a comparatively modern word which has slid into the English language in a manner which puzzles all etymologists. The name

Gun appears to have been the same as the Welsh Gwyne and the name Gawne still common in the Isle of Man."

Before dealing with this somewhat elaborate account, further writing has to be given. In his "History of the Macdonalds," Mackenzie says about Hugh, the third son of the Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles (justiciary of Scotland north of the Forth), that he was "often called Austin and Augustine, being a corruption of the Gaelic equivalent of Hugh, that is, Huistean or Wistean. He was styled Lord of Sleat, and married first Finvola, daughter of MacIain of Ardnamurchan, by whom he had John, his heir, who died without issue. He married secondly a lady of the clan Gunn in Caithness, by whom he had issue who carried on the succession, and whose descendants are now held by general concurrence to represent as heirs male John, last Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, forfeited in these honours respectively in 1475 and 1494. A question has been raised about the legitimacy of Hugh as well as of his descendants, especially Donald Gallach, from whom is descended the present Lord Macdonald of the Isles. Respecting Hugh, after describing the results of a successful raid under him to Orkney in 1460, Hugh Macdonald" [in his MS. history, time of Charles II.] "says that having routed the enemy, Austin (Hugh) and his party began to ravage the country, that being the only reward for their pains and fatigue, with which having loaded their galleys they returned home. Austine having halted at Caithness, he got a son by the coroner of Caithness's daughter of the name of Gunn, which at that time

was a very flourishing name there, descended of the Danes. This son was called Donald Gallich, being brought up in that county in his younger years ; for the ancient Scots until this day call the county of Caithness Gallibh.”

Mackenzie seconds Gregory on the legitimacy point :—“ I call these sons ” [Celestine and Hugh] “ legitimate notwithstanding that Celestine is called *filius naturalis* by Earl Alexander in a charter in the charter chest of Mackintosh, 1477, and *frater carnalis* by Earl John, Register of Great Seal, 1463, and that Hugh is likewise called *frater carnalis* by Earl John in a charter, 1470, in Westfield writs, in the possession of Alexander Dunbar, Esq. of Scrabster. They are, however, both called *frater*, without any qualification, by Earl John in Register of the Great Seal. The history of Celestine and Hugh and their descendants as given in the present work ” [his “ Highlands and Isles ”] “ sufficiently shows that they were considered legitimate, and that consequently the words *naturalis* and *carnalis*, taken by themselves and without the adjunct *bastardus*, do not necessarily imply bastardy. It is probable that they were used to designate the issue of those handfast or left-handed marriages which appear to have been so common in the Highlands and Isles. Both *naturalis* and *carnalis* are occasionally applied to individuals known to be legitimate in the strictest sense of the term.” Gregory’s position is not even strongly enough stated, for all modern antiquaries know that the terms *naturalis* and *carnalis* meant sons of the blood as against adopted and bastard ones. English and Scottish records

of those centuries agree in this. The question has been thoroughly settled in *Notes and Queries*. Many families have suffered through later ignorance on this curious point. For a time legal and other interpreters have thus actually put the bar sinister on legitimate shields.

In another place Mackenzie has, "John Hughson died without issue in 1502, but he was succeeded in the property by his brother, Donald Gallach, previously referred to as the issue of his father by Mary, daughter of Gunn, coroner of Caithness, and from him is descended the family of the present Lord Macdonald of the Isles, who still possesses the Sleat property in Skye." Of Donald Gallach Macdonald, third of Sleat, Mackenzie writes, "The strict legitimacy of this chief has always been considered doubtful, and we can find no record of any formal marriage by his father to the daughter of Gunn, coroner of Caithness." He thinks Hugh Macdonald, the family historian, gives presumptive evidence that there was no formal marriage. Donald, the Caithnessman, half Macdonald and half Gunn, was murdered by his bastard brother Archibald in 1506.

The relations which the Keiths held to the Gunns is told with knowledge and skill by G. M. Sutherland, in his "Notes on Caithness History." About the clan Gunn, he says that Skene scarcely puts it on a level with other clans, and Sutherland admits it to have been of the minor class. His discussion of the origin of the Gunns is cautious. He thinks they were of Norse descent from Gunnus, and Gunnus not as descended



from the Norwegian kings of the Isle of Man, but according to Torfæus's account of him as the brother of Sweyn, the celebrated viking of Freswick, their father being Olaus Rolfi and their mother Asleif. Rolfi was prefect of Duncansbay for the earl of Orkney. Of Sweyn as the same blood with the Gunns something full and definite must be said hereafter. Gunnus married a grandchild of Earl Ronald, and their son Snokollus claimed the half of Orkney and Caithness in right of his mother. His claim was resisted by Earl John, whom Snokollus slew in Thurso at night, stabbing him nine times, the year of God 1231. Sutherland, following Torfæus, says he had to appear at the court of Norway to answer for the deed; and was deprived of his Orkney estates because of it. Retiring to his Caithness estate, he became known as the great Gunn of Ulbster. From this centre the Gunns spread into the Highland districts of Caithness as well as along the eastern seashore. Clyth was their early stronghold. They had two castles in this district, that of Castle Gunn at East Clyth and Halberry Castle at Mid Clyth, traces of both being still extant.

The Keiths of Ackergill had come to Caithness as strangers by marriage of one of the Cheyne heiresses, and the proximity of their lands to that of the Gunns bred disputes. It is said that Dugald Keith, steward for Earl-Marshal Keith, was the real cause of an undying feud between the Keiths, with what support they could get, and the numerous Gunns. Helen, the daughter of Lachlan Gunn in Braemore, had been betrothed to her kinsman Alexander Gunn, but Keith fell in love with the

beauty of Braemore, and carried her away by a party of men on her wedding night, killing the bridegroom and others of the clan. The site of Lachlan's house is still known. Keith bore her to Ackergill Tower, and did her the wrong that has given her the title of "The Lucretia of Caithness." In her sorrow she sprang from the battlements of the tower, a height of eighty feet, and thus ended her young life. Her name on a tombstone in the north burial ground to the west of Ackergill Tower was deciphered some years ago.

But there were other reasons for jealousy between the new comers and the older possessors of power in Caithness, reasons territorial and official. About the beginning of the fifteenth century the Norse Gunns were getting into a secondary position in the presence of the distinguished Keiths and Oliphants of Scotland. The battle of Tannach Moor was the greatest struggle of the Gunns to keep their standing against the charter system. The Keiths, who perhaps did not then, 1438, number a dozen in the county, had diplomatically to gain the inhabitants of the district in advancing their purposes; and only by aid of the Mackays of Strathnaver did they defeat the Gunns, the slaughter on both sides being great. Provost Sutherland thinks that the attempt to make peace by combat of equal numbers was, on the part of the Gunns, a desire to end many years' fightings. He gives the Gordon version of the massacre, as having taken place in the chapel of St. Aire (which, with the late William Miller, Wick, he believes the right spelling), and also the traditional account of the fight, as in Strathmore. The latter

is recounted more fully by Taylor, Golspie, without essential difference in the details. There is an inclination to accept Gordon's narrative as having best evidence. Reference is made to Buchan's "History of the Family of Keith," which quotes the story from "Rare Scottish Tracts" in almost the very words of Gordon. As the affair happened about 1478, it is not easy to decide whether Gordon copied from these "Tracts," or they from him, though the latter is the more probable explanation of the similarity.

This ground, however, has been frequently gone over, but Provost Sutherland has contributed the following extremely interesting and valuable addition to Gunn history:—"The Gunns must have latterly been hard pressed, for war was carried to their very doors of Haberry Castle. In the '*Origines Parochiales Scotiae*' there occurs the following sentence:—'Betwixt Middle Clyth and Easter Clyth, five miles to the E.N.E. of the church, there are a great many stones standing in a rank and order.' This is based upon a statement taken from the Macfarlane '*Geographical Collection*'" [MSS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh]. "There is a tradition in the locality that a battle took place there between the Keiths and the Gunns, the distance from Haberry Castle being about three-fourths of a mile. The place is called the Hill of Mannistanes, or standing stones. The Keiths had nearly vanquished the Gunns through the powerful efforts of 'Keach Mor,' or the big Keith, who wielded a huge two-edged claymore, and slew four or five of the picked men of the Gunns, one after the other.

The day was about won by the Keiths, when one of the Gunns who had been lying on the ground wounded, gave the 'Keach Mor' a back stroke which divided the main tendon of one of his legs. The wound disabled the 'Keach Mor' from further fighting, and thus so dispirited the Keiths that they withdrew from the field, leaving the Gunns victorious, though sorely exhausted. After the 'Keach Mor' had recovered from his wounds, he left the county, to which he never afterwards returned. Associated with him, it is said, while fighting the battle was the devil in the shape of a huge raven on one of the Keach's shoulders. He assisted the Keach by tearing the eyes out of the sockets of some of the Gunns; but the priest from the Clyth chapel, who accompanied the Gunns, knowing the character he had to deal with, administered some of his spiritual lotions, which completely neutralised the influence of his sable majesty. As the number who fought on each side was about the same, the Gunns commemorated the day by burying the dead of both sides in regular rows, and setting up a standing stone at the head of each warrior. Slight modifications of the foregoing statement are made. There are three theories to account for the standing stones, assuming that they have any connection with the Gunns or with a battle between the Keiths and Gunns: first, that the hill was a graveyard; second, that the stones were erected to commemorate a battle; and third, that the stones were put up for defensive purposes. The first theory is easily exploded, because a few hundred yards to the south of Haberry Castle lies the silent graveyard of the district which surrounded the little chapel at

Mid Clyth for ages, while the third theory is untenable in respect that under no possible circumstances would a clan at the period in question have raised such a line of defence connected with warlike purposes. The second theory is the only one that can be viewed in any favourable light, and it is confirmed by tradition coming down from generation to generation. A superstitious dread protected the standing stones from destruction for centuries, but latterly part of them was used for building and other purposes. A small farmer at Bruan is said to have removed one of the stones from the Hill of Mannistanes for the lintel of the fire-place of a kiln, but every time he kindled his fire the stone became a flame, but was never consumed, so that the farmer had no peace until he returned the stone to the exact place from which he removed it. The tradition is given for what it is worth."

It is worth a great deal, as well as the whole tale, which reminds of Homeric battle, and in a more particular way of early Roman history as narrated by Livy. The Corvinus family took their name from a crow or raven's assistance to its founder when fighting a gigantic Gaul. The light which similar periods of civilization throw on human life and emotion cannot be too much appreciated, and the dimmest tradition has its use for the widely cultured.

The tale of the Lechan Ore is quoted from "The New Picture of Scotland," published in 1807. Gunn of Clyth while in Denmark gained the affections of a Danish princess, and "in returning home with the lady and attendants, the vessel was

wrecked upon a rock, and every soul perished. A pot full of gold being found on this rock, it obtained the name of Lechan Ore or Golden Flags. The body of the princess was thrown on the shore, and buried at Ulbster ; and the same stone which is said to cover her grave is still extant, and has some hieroglyphic characters much obliterated by time."

This is compared with local tradition. Gunn is said to have returned before her, having repented of his marriage, and only caring for her wealth. When she arrived at night on a ship at the coast, he had put a light signal at the worst place for landing, and all were drowned, as he intended. He never secured the gold that was on board, and when the clan discovered his treachery they drove him from his castle. He afterwards resided inland at Toft Gunn on the Thrumster hills.

The nature of George Gunn the coroner's office, is discussed next ; but there seems little to be said beyond that the present English law officer of the same name is a good example of the ancient official, or the Scotch procurator-fiscal if receiver of wrecks and raiser of troops on occasion be added to his work. There is no doubt that George Gunn of Ulbster had more ruling duties at the time than his coronership as such implied. But enough is accumulated on this point, to which there are many roads of final settlement. The presumption is that Gunn was very much promoted when he secured a state office ; the tendency of the period being altogether to overlook natives such as he was in favour of Edinburgh court favourites, when anything worth having was to be dispensed.

Reference is made to the sanguinary drawn battle of Harpsdale in 1426 between the Gunns and Mackays. The usual historians give the Mackays a complete victory, and undoubtedly till Caithnessmen had the superior civil and military experience of the Roslin family to head them, the Mackays had much their own way, whether with Gunns, Keiths, or other of the county names. It is useful to have this note :—"About 1580 the Macivers" [Campbells] "arrived in the county of Caithness, with the view of protecting the lands in Halkirk and Reay belonging to the Earl Marshal" [Keith] "and the Oliphants from the incursions of the Gunns and others. They were favourably noticed by the Earl of Caithness." The Gunns and Macivers became deadly enemies. "The principal conflict was at Pobbowar, near Harpsdale, in 1594, when the Macivers were defeated owing to the superior strategy of the Gunns. The defeat was not allowed to pass over unceremoniously, for shortly after the Macivers marched to Strathly and defeated the Gunns there. The clan Abrach, deadly enemies of the Gunns, were on very friendly terms with the Macivers." Sir James Sinclair of Murkle headed the Macivers at Strathly, as Colonel David Sinclair of Stirkoke did this same branch of Campbells at Craig Mohr, near Achinabest, shortly before. Sutherland thinks that the Gunns may have laid waste the lands of the Keiths and Oliphants for the reason that the Regent Murray, first husband of Lady Agnes Keith, had beheaded Alexander Gunn, chief of the clan, at Inverness in 1565, because once, as the Earl of Sutherland's attendant, he would not give the top of the street

in Aberdeen to Murray. The story of the burning of Sandside corn in 1615 by the Gunns is shortly referred to with this conclusion :—" Perhaps the Earl of Caithness, bad as he might have been, was blamed too much in the matter." When the House of Gordon did not in more peaceful times require the aid of the clan Gunn, they subsided into comparative obscurity. " The Gunns after a time found that they never had been infest in any lands. They were too careless in this respect. Had they known the value of titles, there can be no doubt that they would have had extensive tracts of country when they realised the fact that they had none. Their residence at Killernan was destroyed by fire in 1690. It is said that the chief and another of the clan were preparing for a hunting expedition, when some powder ignited, with the result that the whole buildings were destroyed by fire. The burial place of the Gunns was at Spittal, and the chiefs, on dying, were carried all the way from Kildonan in the county of Sutherland to Spittal. *Aut pax aut bellum* was certainly a very appropriate motto for the Gunns. Several branches have sprung from the Gunns. The Hendersons are descended from Henry, the coroner's son. William, another of the coroner's sons, is the progenitor of the Wilsons in Caithness, while another of the same name claims the Williamsons. The MacIans or Caithness Johnsons come from John, who was slain at St. Aire's by the Keiths. The Gallies, who settled in Ross-shire in troublous times, were of the clan Gunn stock. The name is derived from Gall'aodh, and doubtless the surname Gullach has the same origin. The deceased George Gunn in



Rhives, was the tenth MacHamish, but living as the Gunns were at Killernan, and after they became dispersed, it is difficult to say who was the real head of the clan, as the descendants of many near relatives might never have known, or at least troubled themselves, about a chieftainship to which no land was attached, on the death of William, the eighth MacHamish." The "Notes" were published in 1881 in the *Celtic Magazine*.

Alexander Sinclair, Forss, whose mother was Gunn, and who knows many Gunn traditions, has the numbers of combatants of Gunns and Keiths as seven and fourteen. There were two fights. All the Gunns were slain at that in Strathmore except William the eldest, and Henry *Beg* the youngest. The latter proposed the revenge of Dirlot Castle, on condition that, if he conquered William would give him the right of eldest, and therefore of chiefship. An old woman guided them, and showed the only path up the rock on which the castle stood. After the arrow killed the chief of the Keiths in Sutherland's feasting-hall, Henry over the lintel of the door and William at the side slew those who came rushing out. William did not keep his agreement with Henry, who therefore instituted the independent clan of the Hendersons. When Lord Glenorchy came to fight the battle of Altmarlach in 1680, he had the favour on the previous night of grass and other camping accommodation from Gunn of Braemore, for which Glenorchy gave him a charter, so that from tacksman he became holder in perpetual fee to that superior. The site of this encampment is still traceable on Maiden Pap.

The Rev. Alexander Pope, Reay, has some useful references to the clan Gunn in the fifth appendix, "Of Caithness, Strathnaver, and Sutherland," contributed by him to Pennant's "Tour in Scotland, 1769." The date of Pope's paper was 1772. He says, "Upon a rock in the edge of the sea in Easter Clyth, there is an old building called Chruner Gunn's Castle. This gentleman, of the name of Gun, was Coronator or Justiciary of Caithness: he was basely murdered with several gentlemen of the name, and of other names, in the kirk of St. Teay, near Castle Sinclair, by Keith, Earl Marischal. The story is told at full length in the history of the family of Sutherland. This happened in the 15th century." He says the clan Landris, in Ross-shire, supposed to be Gunns, was descended from Paul Meutier's daughter, in Creich parish, and Hulver or Leander, a Dane, to whom was given the lands of Strahohee. Under the heading PARISH OF KILDONAN is this:—"The parish consists of a valley divided into two parts by the river Helmsdale or Illie, only fit for pasture. The parish kirk is dedicated to St. Donan. A tribe lived here called Gunns, of Norwegian extraction. They have continued here upwards of five hundred years, and contributed to extirpate the Danes out of Sutherland. They were in all times satellites to the earls of Sutherland. Their chieftain is lately dead, and represented by two boys. It were to be wished that some generous person would take care of their education." Pope tells the story of Frakirk as told by Torfæus. Swen came to Kildonan and fought with the lady's guard, Aulver Rosta. He burnt her

dwelling at Kildonan, in revenge of her killing his father Olaf, the prefect of Duncansbay. Swen's mother had escaped. "Her son Gunnus," says Pope, "the ancestor of the Gunns, was not with her, and Swen was also absent." The burning of Frakirk's mansion at Kildonan was in the twelfth century. Under PARISH OF HALKIRK, he mentions that "there was a battle fought in the sixteenth century by the Gunns and others at a place called Blarnandoss, near Harpsdale, wherein the Gunns were routed."

In his "Beauties of Scotland," Forsyth has a story of the tacksman of Braemore, Robert Gunn, who about 1520 refused to pay his dues to the superior, John Sinclair, earl of Caithness, and wounded John Sinclair of Stirkoke, who was sent with an armed party to enforce them, probably the first hostile encounter between the Sinclairs and the Gunns. Robert's love affairs are also celebrated. He shot, with bow and arrow, Sutherland of Langwell that he might marry his wife, and afterwards, to shield himself from revenge, contrived to marry his daughter to Sutherland's giant son (ancestor of the Brabsters), who was killed in Orkney at the battle of Summerdale under John, the above earl, in 1529. See Calder pp. 109, 110, and 324.

In the time of the Rev. Timothy Pont, minister of Dunnet, who drafted maps of Caithness, Sutherland, and Strathnavernia about 1608, the residence of the leading man of the Gunns was at Killernan. These maps were not published till Blaeu's "Atlas" appeared; and it is interesting to notice that John Speed, author of "The History of England," when his elaborate

work, "The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain: an exact Geography of England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Isles," came out in 1662, at the house of Roger Rea, senior, and Roger Rea, junior, London, refers in high terms to the geographical labours of the Caithness clergyman. Instead of elaborating Scotland, county by county, as he does England and Ireland, heraldic and historic detail added to the geographic, Speed gives one general map of Scotland, and short letterpress to it, explaining that he was "happily prevented by a learned gentleman of the nation, who hath most exactly begun and gone through the greatest difficulties thereof, Master Timothy Pont." His own map of Scotland, as far as the northern counties are concerned, is of the vaguest character as to boundaries. The southern limit of Strathnavernia is from Loch Laxford to the source of the river Thurso, and thence direct to Duncansbay. Forsnard is in Caithness. But he has some valuable items. The Wiffle is a branch of the Ully or Helmsdale river; Noss Head was then named Catness; the "men of Mey" and "bores of Duncansbay" had representatives in "the swell," "the heppers," "the boyer;" Pentland Firth was "Pinthland," Reay "Ra," Scrabster "Strabubaster;" and on the Halladale there was a place called Dimay. There are pictures of the Highlanders then, as with only one garment, for head-dress and all, the men with right arm and chest bare. In this work, as in his history, Speed tells the story of Sir Hubert Sinclair of Colchester, who saved the life of Henry II. at the siege of Bridgenorth by stepping between the king and an arrow, which he fatally

received in his own body. With Pont, Killernan is six miles from Helmsdale, on the southern bank of the river, and about two miles from the borders of Caithness. It is within six miles of the boundary of Strathnavernia, the hills of Knock Finn and Ben Griam being between. The ancient Kildonan Kirk is on a branch of the Helmsdale more to the south, about two miles nearer the centre of ancient Sutherland, which was then of very limited extent. Killernan was about twelve miles, over the hills, from Dunrobin. In the river valley to the east were Duybol, Torris, Marl, and Helmsdale.

Helmsdale, or, as it was called then, Strathully, belonged to the earls of Caithness from 1516 to 1591, when it was exchanged for the hereditary tenantry which the earls of Sutherland had of the church lands in Caithness. Adam, the first Gordon earl of Sutherland, had the earldom by assuming that Alexander Sutherland, his wife's brother, was a bastard; and gave Helmsdale to John, earl of Caithness, to support his usurpation, John being his wife's near cousin. The year after Strathully became the latter's, Adam Gordon, the self-elected earl of Sutherland, went to Edinburgh, and in his absence the Mackays of Strathnaver tried to conquer Sutherland. Alexander, the reputed bastard, was moved by his sister, the countess, to oppose the Mackays. A pitched battle was fought at Torran Dow, near Rogart, in 1517, in which the Mackays were overthrown with about 300 men slain, the Gordon party losing 38. William, the son of James, the son of Coroner Gunn, was conspicuous in the fight on the Sutherland side, and

pursued the Mackays in their flight till darkness forced him to desist. Sir Robert Gordon, in "The Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland," calls him the chief of the clan Gunn in Sutherland, and gives the following:—"William, the son of James, chieftain of the clan Gunn here mentioned, was called Cattigh. He was born and bred in Sutherland. From him are descended those of the clan Gunn who dwell at this day" [1630] "in Strathully. They have always since that time" [1517] "had the lands of Killernan for their service from the earls of Sutherland, unto whom they have ever been both trusty and faithful. After the conflict at Torran Dow, this William killed George Keith of Ackergill with his son and twelve of their followers at Drummoy" [near Golspie] "in Sutherland, as they were travelling from Inverugie" [the Keith's estate near Peterhead, in Aberdeenshire] "into Caithness. This William did in revenge of the slaughter of his grandfather, the coroner, who was slain before by the Keiths."

It is probable that Gunn's land began in Strathully, where the Earl of Caithness's stopped, though the latter may really have been his superior, and not the Earl of Sutherland, as Sir Robert says, the Caithness origin of the Gunns being clear. The Earl of Caithness had Strathully in 1516, and Gunn first appears at Killernan, Strathully, in 1517. It is true Sir Robert Gordon says he was born and bred in Sutherland, but his views of what was or was not Sutherland were very variable. The name Cattigh is further proof of William being a native of Caithness.

Let the manner of the slaughter of the coroner by the Keiths be now quoted from Sir Robert:—"After some dissension between the Keiths and the clan Gunn, there was a meeting appointed for their reconciliation at the chapel" [and courthouse] "of St. Tayr in Caithness, not far from Girnigo Castle, where they were to meet with twelve horsemen on each side. The coroner, then chieftain of the clan Gunn, with the most part of his sons and principal kinsmen, came at the appointed time to this chapel, to the number of twelve. As they were within the chapel at their prayers, the laird of Inverugie and Ackergill arrived with twelve horses, and two men upon each horse. These twenty-four men rushed in at the door of the chapel and invaded the coroner and his company unawares, who nevertheless made great resistance. In the end the Gunns were slain, and the most part of the Keiths also. Their blood may be seen at this day" [1630] "upon the walls within the chapel where they were killed. James Gunn the coroner's son, being absent, and hearing of his father's death, retired, himself and his family, into Sutherland, where he settled, and begat this William, called William Cattigh. From this coroner all the clan Gunn are descended, and are after him called the clan coroner. They are called clan Gunn from one named Gun, whom they allege to have been the king of Denmark's son, who came many years ago from Denmark and settled in Caithness."

The earldom of Caithness was given to William, earl of Orkney, in 1455, by James II.; so the coroner's rule ended then. It is possible, however, that before his son, the William

who was slain in 1513 at Flodden, came to Caithness in 1476, the coroner held rule under the Sinclairs. Further, William, this second earl of Caithness, but the first who was resident, married Mary, the daughter of Sir William Keith of Inverugie and Ackergill, which may explain the flight of the Gunns from Caithness, and the impunity of the Keiths, at least for a time. It is not improbable that the coroner was claiming right over some of the lands which Mary Keith was bringing to the Earl of Caithness, and he may also have been grumbling at the loss of his power on the earl's coming to the county. In England, Scotland, and most feudal countries at that period, towards the end of the fifteenth century, a coroner's proper duties, as has been said, were much the same as those of a procurator-fiscal now, a sheriff, or viscount, or deputy-earl being also in every county. But Gunn's ability and the state troubles of the time may have gathered all these offices into his hands. There can be no doubt that he was an able man, and that his historical existence is one of the best established facts in the local history. The dates and relationships given by Gordon, compared with other sources, correspond perfectly, and the foot is on firm ground to very satisfactory degree. It need not be disputed much whether Killernan was possessed by James, or whether it was not the heights of Caithness to which he retired. At all events, the Gunns from that time spread, after the style of the three-legged coin of the Isle of Man, into Sutherland, Caithness, and Strathnavernia. It was this position which gave them their power for good or evil, the latter being the more prominent,



because of the spirit of the times and of their threefold embarrassment with fighting neighbours. They became, like the clan Macgregor, the terror of everybody and the friend of none ; and this more by local situation than by inclination.

The terrible feud of the Gunns with the Abrach portion of the Mackays seems to have begun because of William Gunn's fierce pursuit of them in the greatest of all the local battles, Torran Dow, in 1517. In 1549, when John Gordon, earl of Sutherland, died, and in the latter days of his father Adam, Sir Robert Gordon says that George, Earl of Caithness, the son of John, and grandson of William, who fell at Flodden, stirred up Mackay of Strathnavernia to continue his battles with the earls of Sutherland, and that he sent Caithnessmen across the border to pillage, "but in companies so disordered and small, so secretly assaulting, so suddenly retiring, and so desirous of pillage rather than any other thing, that they seemed more like to be ordinary robbers and thieves than open enemies, whom nevertheless William Gunn of Killernan continually expelled and repulsed." When Iye Mackay was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle in 1556, for not answering the queen regent's summons to Inverness, and for his subsequent invasions of Sutherland, John More Mackay came and burnt St. Ninian's chapel in Navidale, but the Sutherlanders hotly pursued him under William Gunn, and near Ben More, in Berriedale, beside the water of Garwary, they killed, drowned, and put to flight, the Strathnaver men. "This was one of the greatest overthrows that ever the Strathnaver men had excepting the battle of

Knoken-dow-Reywird (Torran Dow)." William Gunn must have died without direct heir, for between 1563 and 1565 Sir Robert Gordon puts the story of Alexander Gunn, who was beheaded then at Inverness, and he says Alexander was "the son of John, the son of Robert, chieftain of the clan Gunn." No doubt Robert was a brother of William (the warrior of no small note), and John his nephew and heir. Alexander, this nephew's son, was executed by the influence of the Earl of Moray, Queen Mary's bastard brother, ruler of Scotland, "because," to quote the exact words of the historian, "upon a time when the earls of Sutherland and Huntly happened to meet the Earl of Moray full in the face upon the street of Aberdeen, this Alexander Gunn, being in service with the Earl of Sutherland, and walking then in the first rank before his master, would not give the Earl of Moray any part of the way, but forced him and his company to leave the same." He explains that it was a custom among the Scots to contend for the height of the street, and among the English for the wall. The Earl of Moray captured Alexander Gunn at Nairn, and had him executed "under pretence of justice."

In 1570, "when John Sinclair, Master of Caithness, burnt Dornoch, and drove the Murrays away, Gunn of Strathully, Mack-wick-kaines, fled for refuge into Glengarry's country, as being an upholder of the Murrays against George, Earl of Caithness." These fugitives did not return till 1573.

"Some time before 1579 the following took place, after the the Earl of Caithness seized, in the minority of Hugh Mackay,

John More Mackay who ruled Strathnaver. John Beg Mackay, the bastard brother of Hugh Mackay, governed the country of Strathnaver almost for the space of seven years, during which time John Gunn (Robson), chieftain of the clan Gunn in Caithness and Strathnaver, began to depend upon Earl Alexander [Gordon] of Sutherland, and brought to him into Sutherland the duties and rents of the bishop's lands within Caithness, which right appertained to him. Earl George repining hereat, conceived a hatred for John Gunn; and his malice proceeded so far, that he moved his son-in-law, Hugh Mackay, being as yet young, to spoil and waste the clan Gunn's lands in Braemore in Caithness, not acquainting his brother John Beg Mackay therewith. John Beg was much offended, because the clan Gunn had always favoured Mackay's house and family. He well perceived that this was the Earl of Caithness's policy, thereby to make away with such as were truest to the Earl of Sutherland. Hereupon John Gunn (Robson), assisted by Earl Alexander of Sutherland, invaded Strathnaver, fought with the inhabitants, killed divers of them, chiefly those who accompanied Hugh Mackay to Braemore, and carried a great prey of goods out of Strathnaver. This he brought into Sutherland, and dispersed it among the clan Gunn of Strathully. The conflict was called Creagh-drumi-doun."

The following paragraph from Sir Robert gives further items : — "In the month of September, 1579, John Beg Mackay and William Gunn, the son of John, the son of Robert (the brother of John Robson before mentioned) were invaded at Balnakiel

in Durness, and there slain with divers others, under silence of night, by Neil, the son of John, the son of William, chieftain of the sub-clan Abrach, and James the son of Roderick, chieftain of the sub-clan of Big John, at the Earl of Caithness's instigation, because that now they gave their dependence to the Earl of Sutherland; at which time John, the son of John, the son of Donald Wane in Cinenes (chieftain of the sub-clan Seill-wohan) escaped with great valour through his enemies, being then in the company of John Beg Mackay. . . . Upon the death of John Beg Mackay and William Gunn (the son of John, the son of Robert), brother of John Gunn (Robson), there followed the inveterate deadly feud between the Gunns and the Abrach Mackays. . . . What with their asperous names, together with the confusion of time, place, and persons, it would be a struggle for the reader to be troubled to understand them. To save my own pains and his, who would get little delight or profit from them, I pass them over." Shrewd Sir Robert, in this as in many other things, made mistake; for no chapter would have been more useful or interesting, had he put it in his history.

In the year 1585 the clan Gunn joined Hugh Mackay of Strathnaver to aid the laird of Assynt against Neil Houcheonson, who had the isle of Assynt, and who was the Earl of Sutherland's follower. The Earl of Caithness also sent his men with Mackay, the bulk of whom seem to have been Gunns. The Earl of Sutherland was about to invade Caithness in revenge, and especially to punish the Gunns, who had proved

faithless to his house ; but the earls of Caithness and Sutherland were reconciled at Elgin by the Earl of Huntly. "Then," says Sir Robert, "was it concluded amongst them that some of the clan Gunn should be made away, chiefly such of that tribe as dwelt in Caithness, because they were judged to be the principal authors of those troubles and commotions which were likely to ensue in that diocese ; for the Earl of Caithness and Mackay had now of late taken upon them the maintenance of the clan Gunn, and the Earl of Sutherland had taken the Abrach Mackays, with their chieftain Neil (the son of John, the son of William), into his protection. At this time also was the marriage in hand between the Earl of Caithness and Lady Jane Gordon, the Earl of Huntly's sister ; and upon the Earl of Caithness's consent to this course against the clan Gunn, the Earl of Huntly yielded to the marriage, which was solemnised in the same year of God 1585.

"The clan Gunn are a race of people dwelling within the diocese of Caithness, and are divided among the three countries of Sutherland, Caithness, and Strathnaver. They are very courageous—desperate rather than valiant. They have such intelligence and correspondence among themselves, that they run all one course when any of them is pursued in any of these countries. In time of war they have always served with the Earl of Sutherland and Mackay. In time of peace they have always made their gain and profit of the Earl of Caithness and his country. But he can hardly trust them with any service, particularly if against the Earl of Sutherland or Mackay,

neither do they repose any great confidence in him. Such of that tribe as have always dwelt in Sutherland have been ever faithful to their masters the earls of Sutherland. Their commander and chieftain is called Mack-wick-Kames, and remains always in Killernan, Strathully, where he has some lands and possessions from the earls of Sutherland as a fee for his service. John Robson, chieftain of the clan Gunn in Caithness and Strathnaver, did now of late, in the year of God 1618, make his refuge of Sutherland, having fallen out with the Earl of Caithness and Mackay; so that this whole surname for the present depends altogether upon the house of Sutherland."

On return from the meeting at Elgin, the Earl of Caithness repented his promise, and refused to deliver up those of the clan Gunn in Caithness obnoxious to the Gordons (the earls of Sutherland and Huntly). Huntly came to Dunrobin, and sent for his brother-in-law the Earl of Caithness, and also for Mackay. The latter did not come, and was denounced rebel. The Earl of Caithness met the Gordons, and they again "determined and concluded to pursue the clan Gunn. Two companies of men were resolved to be sent by the earls of Sutherland and Caithness against such of the clan Gunn as dwelt in Caithness and Strathnaver to encompass them, so that no place of flight might be left to them. The Earl of Caithness, nevertheless of all this, quietly and underhand advertised the clan Gunn hereof, by means of Angus Sutherland of Mellary, in Berriedale. But the clan Gunn were loth to trust him, knowing by their secret intelligence that the Earl of Caithness had caused his people to

assemble together. The Earl of Sutherland's host convening speedily, went on forward to pursue the clan Gunn according to promise. But meeting first by chance with William Mackay, the brother of Hugh, accompanied with divers of his countrymen of Strathnaver, who had even then taken and carried away James the son of Rory's cattle out of Corrikean Loch in the Diri Meanigh, James being then the Earl of Sutherland's defender, they rescued and brought back the booty and cattle. They chased William Mackay and the Strathnaver men all that day, and killed one of the principals of the clan Gunn in Strathnaver, called Angus Roy Gunn, with sundry others of William Mackay's company. This was called Claw-tom-Richi, that is, 'the day of the heather bush.' About the evening, they followed them in hot chase even to the marches and bounds of Caithness, where the clan Gunn had assembled and collected their cattle, on hearing that the inhabitants of Caithness were gathered and up in arms. In the meantime, William Mackay, with the Strathnaver men, joined with the clan Gunn, whom they met in the hills thus by chance, and they promised to die and live together, and to participate of each others' fortunes, good or bad. Hereupon they perceived the Earl of Caithness's host in sight of them, which was conducted by Henry Sinclair, the laird of Dun's brother. Then they went into consultation among themselves whether they should fight against the Caithness men fresh and in breath awaiting them, or turn against the Sutherland men already tired with fighting. But the clan Gunn chose rather to hazard against the Caithness men, which

they did without fear or delay, though far inferior in number. They had in mind that nothing was before them but enemies; the deep and bottomless ocean behind them; no place of retreat; no surety but in valour and victory; so, having the advantage of the hill, they set upon the enemy with resolute courage. The Caithnessmen came short with their first flight of arrows. On the contrary, the clan Gunn spared their shot until they came close to the enemy, which then they bestowed among them with great advantage. In the end, by the special help and assistance of the Almighty God, in whose hands are the hearts of men and the events of things, the clan Gunn overthrew the Caithnessmen at Aldgown, upon the borders of Caithness, the year of God 1586, and killed seven score of their most resolute men, with their captain, Henry Sinclair, cousin to the Earl of Caithness and uncle to Hugh and William Mackay. The Caithness host had been all destroyed, if the darkness of night had not favoured their flight, withholding the victors from following the chase. William Mackay was grieved for the slaughter of his uncle, Henry Sinclair, whom he knew not to be there till he was slain. Afterwards in the chase William Mackay spared no man. The Sutherland men, knowing nothing of the clan Gunn, had lost sight of the Strathnaver men while they had them in chase amongst those hills immediately before this skirmish at Aldgown, and had retired into their own country to repose themselves with the booty they had recovered; whereby they understood nothing of the skirmish until it was finished. The disaster justly befel



the Earl of Caithness, because since this overthrow he has openly confessed to divers men that it never was his intention to pursue the clan Gunn at that time, but his purpose and policy was that they might be hotly and eagerly pursued, and then he would relieve them from imminent danger, thereby to make them the more beholden to him and his posterity in all time coming. But the Almighty God measured him rightly, and turned his fraud and subtle policy to his own shame and the destruction of divers of his countrymen."

Sir Robert Gordon seemed to think that Almighty God was always on the side of the Gordons, even when they plotted the atrocity of exterminating their former friends, the Gunns, to the last man. If the humanity was on any side, it was the Earl of Caithness who surely showed most of it by his unwillingness to enter into, or complete, the diabolical Gordon scheme of stopping the Gunn and Abrach Mackay feuds by the extirpation of the Gunns. It was quite another thing for George Sinclair, the fifth Earl of Caithness, after his kinsman and people were slaughtered at Aldgown. According to the spirit of the period, reprisal was the proper course. To this day there are numerous cairns on the hill where the battle took place; the most unfortunate success, in its results, which the Gunns could have. Their contest was not henceforth with a mere branch of the Mackays, as they soon found out. "Shortly after the affair of Aldgown, the Earl of Caithness being carried away with a spirit of revenge and fury against the clan Gunn, hanged John Gunn (the son of John, the son of Rob), chieftain of the clan

Gunn in Caithness, whom he had kept and detained in captivity a good while, having before this time invited him into Girnigo Castle to speak with him. Hugh Mackay was then in Caithness with Earl George, whose father's sister he had married. The inhabitants of Caithness, understanding that his brother, William Mackay, was with the clan Gunn at the conflict of Aldgown, sought for Hugh to slay him, whereupon he was forced in all haste to flee secretly into Strathnaver to escape their fury. Thus there fell out some variance between the inhabitants of Caithness " [and the Mackays] "for assisting the clan Gunn ; so that in a manner as soon as the Sutherland men had ended their troubles with Caithness, and drew to some settling for a short time, the Strathnaver men, assisted by the clan Gunn, as if ordained to revenge the Sutherland men's wrongs one upon another, began to assault the Sinclairs and the inhabitants of Caithness. . . . Then the earls of Sutherland and Caithness, by the effort and mediation of Sir Patrick Gordon of Achindown, who was sent into the north by his nephew, the Earl of Huntly, for the purpose, assembled some of their special friends, and had a friendly meeting at the hill of Bengriam, in Sutherland." Before they met there, an agreement was drawn up at Girnigo Castle to destroy the Gunns, the full text of which is on pages 326 and 327 of the second edition of Calder's "History of Caithness." Sir Robert Gordon continues his narrative thus :—"At the hill of Bengriam" [near Aldgown] "the earls again joined together against the Caithnessian clan Gunn, who were at this time maintained and harboured by

Mackay. The Earl of Sutherland undertook to invade them first, because the Earl of Caithness's forces were lately overthrown by them. Two companies were directed in all haste by Earl Alexander against the clan Gunn. The one was conducted by James Mackay, the son of Rory, and by Neil Mackay (the son of John, the son of William), chieftain of the Abrachs, who were now under the superiority of the Earl of Sutherland. The other company was committed to the charge of William Sutherland, the son of George, George Gordon in Marle, and William Murray in Kinnald, the brother of Hugh Murray of Abirscors. Hugh Mackay perceiving that he was not able to maintain the clan Gunn any longer without danger to himself, discharged them from his country ; whereupon they addressed themselves towards the Western Isles. But as they were upon their journey thither, the first company met them at Lochbroom at Leckmelne, where, after a sharp skirmish, the clan Gunn were overthrown and the most part of them slain. Their captain, George Gunn (the son of John, the son of Rob), brother of John lately hanged in Caithness, was sorely wounded, and taken prisoner after he had escaped a pretty good while by swimming in a lake which was hard by. Then both the Earl of Sutherland's companies met and returned home, after this good success, carrying George Gunn captive along with them to Dunrobin, whom Earl Alexander sent immediately into Caithness to Earl George. The Earl of Caithness, with cheerful dissembling of countenance and grieved heart, received both the news and the prisoner, being inwardly pricked at the

heart with envy and malice at Earl Alexander's good success. George (the son of John, the son of Rob), *alias* Gunn, was afterwards released from thence by the Earl of Sutherland's means, and was set at liberty by the Earl of Caithness. He saved him, not out of any favour towards him, having before made away with his brother, nor for any great respect he had to the Earl of Sutherland's entreaty, who nevertheless wrought his liberty, but only because projecting by his release to devise some new plot to his own advantage by means of this George against some of his neighbours. In this the Earl of Caithness was deceived, for this George Gunn being free out of the Earl of Caithness's hands, remained ever after faithful to the Earl of Sutherland. This moved the Earl of Caithness long afterwards to cause his brother, James Sinclair of Murkle, to pursue Gunn in Strathy, in Strathnaver, the year of God 1594. Thus were the Caithnessian Gunns pursued and hunted to and fro by their neighbours until the year of God 1588, that there fell out trouble and discord betwixt the earls of Sutherland and Caithness."

No reader must forget that Sir Robert was the brother of one and uncle of another earl of Sutherland, and that he was the very hottest instrument of the bitter feud between the Gordons and Sinclairs. On no other grounds can his gratuitous imputation of evil motives on every occasion to his rivals be understood. His facts are usually sound, but his piety and philosophy in attacking the character of his enemies, whether Mackays or Sinclairs, are one of the most extraordinary exhibitions of poor human nature at its worst of blind malice that

books can show. None the less, there is great debt owing to him for his inimitable record of the fierce olden times.

In 1588 the Gordons tried to get the Earl of Caithness to deal with the Mackays of Strathnaver as the Gordon earl of Sutherland had done with the Gunns; but he told Mackay of the plot, though the latter soon after became liege to the Earl of Sutherland, probably through fear.

“In the year of God 1589, Kenneth Buy and his brother Farquhar Buy with their tribe” [the Macivers or Campbells, of whom these were the chieftains, ‘Earl George’s chief councillors in his bad actions, and his instruments in exercising tyranny and oppression against the poor inhabitants of Caithness,’ says Gordon in another place], “hounded out by the Earl of Caithness, made a journey out of Caithness into Strathnaver, and coming to Strathy, they took a herd of cattle from the clan Gunn. When Donald Gunn (the son of William, the son of Henry), and some others of the clan Gunn, understood this, they met Kenneth Buy and the clan Maciver at Ache-Moin-Merkell, where, after a sharp skirmish, the clan Maciver were overthrown, divers of them slain, and the prey recovered.” Some pages after this Sir Robert continues:—“I have shown you already how the last year Donald Gunn (the son of William, the son of Henry) and the clan Gunn overthrew the *seill* or clan Maciver at Ache-Moin-Merkell. In revenge of this, the clan Gunn were invaded and pursued this year, 1590, at Craig Woig [Mohr] by David Sinclair of Stirkoke, the father of John Sinclair afterwards slain at Thurso. He killed some

of the clan Gunn as they lay sleeping in their beds. But Donald Gunn (the son of William, the son of Henry) escaped narrowly, and leaped over a rock of fifteen fathoms' height, being first wounded with swords and pistols, and retired that same night to Strathy with his bleeding wounds."

This fight is perhaps the most interesting that has occurred in Caithness. The Strathy Gunns seem to have had or taken possessions under William Sinclair of Dunbeath, Reay, Sand-side, Downreay, and several Morayshire estates, who cannot have had much sympathy with them after the battle of Aldgown, though he was in a constant state of quarrel with his relative the Earl of Caithness. It is not impossible that his favouring of the Gunns thus was one of the causes of the bitterness between them. At all events, the Gunns were thickly settled on what is now Achinabest Farm, and on the lower grounds to the south and east of it. David Sinclair of Stirkoke was one of the staunchest to the earl; and that he had the military spirit in him, is shown by the fact that he afterwards became lieutenant-colonel of horse in the German wars. It was on and near Achinabest that he gave this tragical waking to the Gunns, who were not the men to lose their lives without desperate struggle. They formed those who were fleeing from their houses into fighting order, at the north of Craig Mohr. Sinclair lost no time in crossing the wide marsh which is the south side of Achinabest. A few hundred yards farther, and he attacked them in a dry hollow at the foot of this craggy hill. That the battle was fiercely contested, the evidence of the

ground still shows. Twenty to thirty important persons were killed, as the cairns tell, the roll of slain being probably equivalent. If each death required a cairn, the number who fell is clear, but it is not settled how this may have been at that period. In 1882 one of these cairns was fully opened, to be certain whether the warriors were buried on the field of battle. Not an indication of this was found. There were no bones, nor was there any digging below the general surface of the ground. It was suggested that if bodies were buried under cairns, even though covered over with turf, the air would speedily destroy all but the traces of organic substance, and a peculiar white fatty covering on the inside stones gave considerable force to the suggestion. Since that time, however, a new theory, which seems to be the right account, has arisen. A curiously informed man, both in Gaelic and English, on druidical and historical subjects, Alexander Sinclair, Forss, whose mother was a Guun, says that each cairn meant a death, but that in those very religious times, at least as to ceremonial, the bodies of the fallen were invariably carried to the consecrated churchyard, and there buried. Having much knowledge of the story of the Gunns, he examined the cairns on Aldgown field as settling the question. To Sir Robert Gordon's account of this fight near Achinabest and Craig Mohr, he adds the historical fact, obtained through the sennachies of the clan Gunn, that not only did Sinclair of Stirkoke defeat the Gunns, but chased them till he killed them all except the Donald mentioned by Gordon as leaping 90 feet down the face of the rocks of Craig Mohr. The

last warrior, he says, was slain at the Caa, Sandside, making for Strathy. That some chieftain of importance was killed in this battle is attested by a standing stone of large proportions near the field of contest. It is 7 to 8 feet high, 3 to 4 feet broad, and about 2 feet thick. Another piece of evidence is that the scene of the fight is called Blainmohr or the "the big battle," while a neighbouring place to the west is named Ach-rasker or "the farm of the flight," and a little farther on the way towards Sandside is Blairasker, meaning "the battle of the flight," as if the Gunns there had made another stand against their pursuers. Donald Gunn who escaped took exactly the opposite direction from the others, going up the northern side of Craig Mohr, pursued by some of Sinclair's men. It was on the south side that he found he had no escape but by jumping down the formidable crags there, and thence going west to Strathy over the hills. About a mile on that course, on a ridge of the Borlum hills, and within sight of Achinabest, is a quantity of upright stones about six feet apart, and in straight rows as if an ancient burying ground. The peculiarity is that there are two groups, at a distance of a hundred yards from each other, the largest of which would represent, from the number of stones in it, the burial of ninety persons at least, the lesser group lower down the ridge counting about fifty. Above both groups, against a long wall-like rock, there is a large enclosure with apparently a fortified gate, which has the character of an entrenchment or place of safety. It is possible that the slain of both the Gunns and the conquerors



may have been taken there for burial, though the place certainly has the suggestions that a sanguinary battle was fought on it, and that the separate groups of stones mean the hostility carried even to burial. But there is no real connection, beyond neighbourhood, to be traced between this mysterious spot and the historical battle at the foot of Craig Mohr. It will be remembered that this was only four years after the victory of the Gunns and Mackays over the Caithnessmen at Aldgown, and that the Gunns of Caithness and Strathnaver were under the condemnation to extermination which the feud spirit of the time compelled. The Lochbroom defeat only destroyed a few of the unfortunate clan, who lived between the three rival districts, to their great suffering and temptation to violence. The scapegoat condition of the clan Gregor, who were similarly reputed as Ishmaels and robbers, and of the Macdonalds in the time of the Glencoe massacre, was much the same as that of the Gunns. Indeed, the last, when tempted to do illegal things, used to compare the terrible fate of the Gregor clan to what might happen to themselves by being the instruments of plotting policy.

As a continuation of this punishing of the Gunns by the Sinclairs, the following Gordonian paragraph may have its place :—"James Sinclair of Murkle was afterwards, the year of God 1594, sent by his brother, the Earl of Caithness, against the clan Gunn in Strathy, in Strathnaver, where he slew some of them ; the chieftain George Gunn (the son of John, the son of Rob) hardly escaping, as shall be shown hereafter, God

willing. Yet, nevertheless of all these services done by the laird of Murkle to his brother, Earl George, he banished him many years out of Caithness, and ever from henceforth they mortally hated one another ; for commonly the enmities of brethren and nearest kinsfolk, if they fall out, are most spiteful and deadly." Sir Robert having blood relationship to the Sinclairs, is himself one of the best examples of this doubtful doctrine. A curious sentence, which would go to prove the Duke of Argyle's opinion in "Scotland as it Was and as it Is" to be correct, that clans of the smaller kind were not of uniform lineage or male kin, may be given :—"This year of God 1590, Donald Gunn (the son of Rory, the son of Red John), one of the clan Gunn, was slain by William Abrach, *alias* William Sutherland, which was the occasion and cause of this William Abrach's slaughter the year of God 1594, as, God willing, shall be shown hereafter." Abrach is usually thought to be the invariable equivalent of Mackay. The following is the fuller account promised :—"The year of God 1594, Farquhar Buy, one of the captains of the clan Maciver, and William Sutherland, *alias* Abrach, the Earl of Caithness's special favourite, and the chief plotter of George Gordon of Marle's slaughter, were invaded in Caithness by Donald Gunn (the son of William, the son of Henry), Alexander (Alister) Gunn (the son of John, the son of Rory), and some others of the clan Gunn. After a sharp skirmish, Farquhar Buy and William Abrach with divers of their followers were slain. In revenge of this, James Sinclair of Murkle was sent this same year of God 1594, by his brother the

Earl of Caithness, against the clan Gunn in Strathy, Strathnaver, where he killed seven of them, George Gunn, their chieftain (the son of John, the son of Rob), and Donald Gunn (the son of William, the son of Henry) hardly escaping. This journey was undertaken against the said George and the clan Gunn not only in revenge of their lately-committed slaughter, but also by reason of the Earl of Caithness's long-conceived displeasure against George for his fidelity and constancy to the Earl of Sutherland and to Mackay."

Earl Alexander of Sutherland and Sir Patrick Gordon of Achindoun died in 1594, and Earl John succeeded to Sutherland earldom. "Earl John, aged nineteen, went into Caithness the year of God 1595 to settle the peace of these countries, and to conclude a perfect friendship and amity betwixt him and George, earl of Caithness, who received him very pleasantly and cheerfully at Girnigo. But mark the effect. In the time that Earl John was at Girnigo, Earl George sent some of the Sutherlands of Berriedale into Strathully to slay David Donaldson of the clan Gunn, a trusty servant to Earl John and to his father, Earl Alexander. Yet by the divine providence of the Almighty God, when Earl George's men arrived at the gentleman's house to kill him, he was gone abroad after supper to walk among the bushes of wood which were hard by, and so escaped their hands, which when they had perceived, they killed a servant of his and then returned into Caithness. The report of this fact came not to the Earl of Sutherland's ears till he departed from Girnigo. Earl John being young, and not able to endure such dealing,

intended presently to revenge the same; but by the diligent mediation of the Marquis of Huntly the matter was reconciled, and the imminent storm settled. But these Sutherlands who committed this fact at the Earl of Caithness's command have since that time received a competent reward from Earl George, for he removed them from their lands and possessions in Berriedale when he purchased it from the Lord of Oliphant."

In July 1601, the Earl of Caithness had taken a number of men near Bengriam hill as if to hunt. The Earl of Sutherland and Mackay, with the aid of the Macleods of Assynt, immediately raised a large army to oppose what they pretended to consider an invasion. On the approach of this army in battle array, the Caithness hunting party dispersed suddenly into their own country. One item of this much ado about nothing was this:—"William Gunn (Mack-wic-Kames) of Killernan, with some of the Gordons, was sent to draw a circuit about and secretly encompass the enemy, thereby to invade them at their backs when and where they least expected." But the game had flown, and the huge army, Gunn's column included, had to content itself with making a heap of stones hard by the hill of Bengriam and calling it Carn Teaghie, or "The Flight Cairn," which is still to be seen. The truth is that the Earl of Caithness had been dared by Hugh Mackay to put his foot across the Caithness borders, and to stop his brag, Earl George again and again made similar hunting excursions into Sutherland and Strathnavernia. At this time nothing was done, and the avenging host immediately returned to their homes. It is

worth noting that in this year, 1601, the 1st of January was chosen instead of the 25th March as the beginning of the year.

On 13th February, 1602, the Earl of Sutherland, with his retinue, went through the glen of Loth from Golspitour, a mile from Golspie kirk, to visit Gunn (Mack-wic-Kames) at his house in Killernan, and the whole party were nearly destroyed in a snowstorm. Three of those who drank whisky or aquavitaë, which enfeebled them by the way, perished ; but "Earl John himself (being a well-disposed and able gentleman) travelled exceedingly well all day long." It is interesting to know of the friendly terms on which the earl and his vassal Gunn were.

In 1607, the Earl of Caithness came again with a hunting party into Strathully, and retired on the uprising of the Mackays and the Earl of Sutherland's men, of whom the Gunns, as it was their district, would be the most prominent.

The following account of the historian by himself will be useful in judging of his narrative and opinions :—"The year of God 1610 Sir Robert Gordon (Earl John's brother) came out of England into Sutherland to visit his friends, being of a long time wished for amongst them, where he fell sick of a certain ague or access and lay at Dunrobin for the space of 17 weeks. Having recovered his health, he returned again into England the year of God 1611. Sir Robert Gordon's chief business in Scotland at that time was to assist Mackay at Edinburgh against the Earl of Caithness, in an action which then Earl George had intended against Mackay for harbouring and

maintaining his nephew John Sutherland." His vain-glory and his malicious inventions against both the Mackays and Sinclairs, who were his nearest relations after the Gordons, the historian Mackay has treated with an animus nearly equal to his own.

In 1599 some lairds of Fife bought a gift from the king of the island of Lewis, which was in disorder by family feuds, and soon after they planted a military colony there. The Macleods resisted, and burnt the fort and camp of the colonists. The Fifeshire leaders were taken, and after eight months' captivity were allowed to go away on promise never to return. They did return, taking with them troops from all the neighbouring countries by virtue of the king's commission: "The Earl of Sutherland at this time sent some forces into the Lewis to assist the adventurers, under the conduct of William Gunn (Mack-wic-Kames), chieftain of the clan Gunn in Sutherland." Tormot Macleod was beaten, sent first to London, and then to Edinburgh, whence in March, 1615, he was allowed to exchange captivity for military service under the Prince of Orange in Holland. Neil Macleod, however, harassed the Fife men till at last they left the island, but the Macleods had next to submit to the Mackenzies of Kintail.

The slaughter of John Sinclair, son of David of Stirkoke, the Earl's brother, in 1612 at Thurso, by the Gordons and Mackays in the seizing of Arthur Smith, the false coiner, Earl George's servant, created great litigation; and in October, 1613, the Earl led an army into Strathully for revenge. He retired by the advice of his brothers, Sir John Sinclair of Greenland

and the laird of Murkle, who brought from Edinburgh the feeling of the Privy Council on their brother's action. But before this, in 1612, a difficulty out of one of the Gunn's doings had caused much ill feeling :—"One of the clan Gunn, called William MacAngus Rory (born in Strathnayer, but then the Earl of Caithness's servant), had done the inhabitants of Caithness divers injuries at the Earl of Caithness's command, and with whomsoever Earl George was offended this William Gunn without fail took away and stole his cattle. At last, William, being in the practice of robbing and stealing, did not spare Earl George's own horses and cattle, but served him with the same measure that he made him serve others. He then left him, at which Earl George was extremely incensed. Yet he dared not summon nor charge any man before the Privy Council for harbouring him within their bounds, because he had the Earl of Caithness's warrant in writing for what he had made him do to others while he was his own servant. This he had always ready to produce when the Earl of Caithness would pursue him, which made Earl George so much the more offended with him, having so far failed his trust and expectation, thinking to have still used him as an instrument against others. William being apprehended in the town of Tain for some other business of the like nature, was released by the Munroes, who gave security to the magistrates of that town for his appearance when he should be required upon due and legal premonition. They showed him such favour because he was Mackay's countryman, whom they advertised with expedition, detaining Gunn in the castle of

Foulis till they should receive Mackay's answer. But William Gunn being kept in the tower of Foulis, and either thinking that his friends in Strathnaver were careless in sending back an answer, or understanding that his life was in danger, jumped from the height of the tower of Foulis, thinking so to escape. But he so hurt his left leg in his fall that he could make no speed to be gone, whereby the laird of Foulis had means to apprehend him again. Being offended that he should have offered to depart in that fashion, he delivered him back again to the provost and bailies of Tain, whence he was sent into Caithness by Sir William Sinclair of Mey, sheriff of Tain. No sooner had Earl George received him than he was presently imprisoned within the castle of Girnigo, now called Castle Sinclair" [since 1606]. "William Gunn had not stayed long in Castle Sinclair when he shifted off his fetters, and jumping out of the castle into the sea, which comes close to the walls thereof, swam safely to the shore. Having lurked two days among the rocks and mountains, he escaped into Strathnaver the year of God 1612. William Sinclair, Lord Berriedale, a gentleman of good inclination, was sent by his father the Earl of Caithness in pursuit of this man. Understanding that he was in Golval of Strathnavernia, he came thither with a company of men, but missing his prey, he apprehended one of Mackay's servants called Angus Herriagh without a commission from his majesty, and carried him along to Castle Sinclair to Earl George, where he was closely imprisoned and put in fetters. It was imagined that this man was the occasion and instrument of William



Gunn's escape out of Golval." Donald Mackay, afterwards the first Lord Reay, stirred up his father Hugh to bring the earl and his son before the justiciary court at Edinburgh. Angus was tried before the Privy Council in June, but set free as innocent, and Sir Robert Gordon, for the Mackays, received him to send him home. Of William Gunn nothing more is known.

The following paragraph from Gordon opens a new chapter of the troubles of the Gunns :—"The Earl of Caithness was in Edinburgh in the month of July 1614, not only" [to try to separate the Mackays and Earl of Sutherland] "but for some riot which the Earl of Caithness had committed against Lord Forbes's servants at Dunbeath, which lands had lately fallen unto Lord Forbes by the death of George Sinclair of Dunbeath. He had married the sister of Lord Forbes, and before his death given the heritable right and title of his estate and living to Lord Forbes. At this the Earl of Caithness was much displeased, because that Dunbeath, being of the surname of Sinclair, did not make Earl George himself his successor, which he expected by reason of an alleged entail. Now being frustrated, he went about by oppression to drive Lord Forbes from these lands."

In an account of the Mackays, whom Gordon makes out to be nearly all bastards, he says one of the daughters of the Iye Mackay who died in 1571, was married to Alexander Gunn (Davidson). During the minority of the next Mackay, Hugh, this is said to have occurred :—"The Earl of Caithness suspecting

him" [John Beg Mackay, the steward] "to favour the Earl of Sutherland, caused Neil Mackay (the son of John, the son of William) and James Mackay, the son of Rory, to invade him at Balnakiel, in Durness, where he was slain, together with William Gunn (the son of John, the son of Rob), one of the chieftains of the clan Gunn. In revenge, James was afterwards slain by John Balloch Mackay and William Mackay, the brother of John Beg, being accompanied by the clan Gunn; and the clan of Red John invaded the clan of John Abrach at Seyzer, within three miles of Loch Naver, and killed Murdo (the son of William, the son of Murdo) with Alister (the son of William) and his son John. This Murdo was slain by Rorie Mackay (the son of William, the son of Red John), who likewise was even then killed by the said Murdo. For this the deadly feud increased between the clan Abrach and the clan Gunn, almost to the utter ruin of them both, the particulars of which I omit, for the memory of those bloody quarrels brings always with it a kind of renewing of old rancours. All these discords were afterwards settled by Hugh Mackay with great wisdom and foresight."

In 1615 John, earl of Sutherland, died, and Sir Robert Gordon as tutor, uncle to the minor earl, ruled the earldom, being then 35 years of age. "In the month of January, 1616," says the tutor, "William and John, the two sons of Kenneth Buy in Caithness, with seven others of the clan Maciver, were taken prisoners in the glen of Loth in Sutherland upon this occasion. Since the slaughter of John Sinclair at Thurso, the Earl of Caithness never desisted to entice his countrymen

sometimes one and sometimes another, by all the fair allurements he could, to effect some stratagem either in Sutherland or Strathnaver. Amongst others he often dealt with William Kennethson, whose father Kenneth Buy had always been the chief instrument of this Earl George of Caithness's oppression within his own country. In the end he so far prevailed with William, that he yielded unto Earl George's demand. Thus then the earl and he laid their plot that William, being already the king's rebel for a criminal cause, should undertake a voluntary banishment, and flee to Mackay for succour. To him he was to show that he had left Caithness lest he should be urged by Earl George to do some secret service against Strathnaver, choosing rather to leave his native soil than to undertake any service of that kind, to which he was ever solicited by the Earl of Caithness. So they spread a rumour through these countries that William Maciver had left Caithness because he would not obey Earl George to execute his wrath against Sir Robert Gordon or Mackay. Thereupon William Maciver with his brother John and the rest of the company fled into Strathnaver. Donald Mackay, imagining that no man would be so malicious as to leave his own country and parents to do harm to another who had never offended him, received him kindly. He desired William and his company to abstain from all kinds of robbery and theft, with the which offences they had been spotted of late by the common and open fame of their own country. To the effect that they might desist from that trade, he gave them a possession to dwell in. Having stayed a month

or two in Strathnaver waiting to perform some villany there, stealing in the meantime cattle and horses out of Caithness, which was permitted them by Earl George until they had finished their business, Kenneth Buy came secretly by night into Strathnaver to speak with his children, being sent thither by the Earl of Caithness to accelerate his intended purpose. Mackay was then in Sutherland with his uncle Sir Robert Gordon, which when William Maciver understood, having parted from his father, he with his whole company made into Sutherland, thinking to find some good and fit occasion there to perform something either against Sir Robert or Mackay. Being upon their journey, they were apprehended stealing in the glen of Loth by some of the clan Gunn, who presented them to Sir Robert at Dornoch. One of the most resolute men of these Macivers called John "the Strong," son of Donald, the son of Big Murdo, was slain then in the glen of Loth, because he would not yield himself up like the rest. William Maciver and his brother John were imprisoned in the castle of Dornoch, and reserved for a further trial. Two of the greatest malefactors among them were at that time empannelled, convicted by a jury, and hanged. The rest, except the two brothers, were suffered to depart, having given security to keep the king's peace in time coming."

It is hardly to be wondered at that Sir Robert was in a mortal terror of Earl George which made him continually imagine quite impossible devices. Through his own narrative it is plain that Earl George was in similar dread from his

schemes, and again and again the Earl of Caithness accused him privately and publicly of laying plots for his life. The relation that this has to the Gunns, is that they actually had the over-balancing power between the Gordons, the Mackays, and the Sinclairs. Whichever of the three districts had their swords took the preponderance, and nothing but politic dealings could preserve the existence and property of the opponents of the Gunns. Of the Sinclair family itself at that time there could not have been more than a dozen men of full age, and all these were the immediate relations of the earl. It will be seen at once that their only safety lay in managing the natives of the district against each other if quarrels arose. When the Gunns became friendly to the Gordons, who were also few, the Earl of Caithness found his position most critical, his tenants being at the mercy of the Gunns of the west of Caithness and east of Sutherland. Every word of abuse that Sir Robert Gordon applies to the Sinclairs, is applicable from the other points of view to the Gordons and Mackays. They were all driven to deceitful and violent work by the anomalous position of the clan Gunn, who ultimately losing their power became the scapegoats for punishment by the three provinces. It is a complete mistake to allow that George, earl of Caithness, was a whit more unscrupulous, cruel, or wicked than Sir Robert Gordon or Donald Mackay. They were all simply fighting for their own hands, and Earl George, as having the fewest blood relations in his province, had the most difficult task of all three to keep his rights. The Sinclairs had thoroughly

stopped the old Mackay massacring invasions of the fifteenth century, because the Caithnessmen could be marshalled by them for self-preservation. When the Gunns, who were genuine people of Caithness, defected to the houses of Gordon and Mackay, they left divisions in the county very difficult to master, their relatives being so numerous. Even the fact that Earl George was married to a Gordon, the sister of the Marquis of Huntly and near relation to Sir Robert Gordon, could not prevent difficulties which the terrible position compelled. It was fate and not persons that had to do with the so-called wicked deeds, which were pretty equally spread over all three provinces. The horrible attempt, at the instigation of the Gordons, to exterminate the clan Gunn, shows the real situation. There can be no doubt that Earl George exhibited, to his personal sorrow through the loss of his kinsmen at Aldgown, more humanity in this compact than the Gordons. It was in 1585 at Elgin, as already said, that they agreed that the causes of quarrel should be wholly put on the shoulders of the Gunns; and it was the misfortune and not the fault of the latter that their violent deeds stood out as unmistakable facts. But Earl George had previously tried a much more human way of curbing the power for mischief which the Gunns, to their own grief, had from their unhappy local position. He took the Macivers (Breadalbane "broken" Campbells) under his protection, to make them the guardians of his marches against the Gunns, who were now disaffected to his interests in favour of his anxious and, it must be said, timid and falsely-

imaginative rivals. Principal Campbell of Aberdeen, in his account of his own clan, says, "The antagonists against whom the Macivers seem to have been most frequently pitted were the Gunns, a fierce and warlike race who under their chief, patronymically styled MacHamish, formed at this period the border guard of Sutherland on the north-east. Between the two clans attacks and reprisals continued from the arrival of the Macivers till 1616." The Macivers were the Caithness border guard. It must be remembered that it was the Macivers who, as the soldiers, gained the victory near Achinabest, under the earl's brother, David Sinclair of Stirkoke, and who under James Sinclair of Murkle, another brother of the earl, visited Strathly. It cannot be too clear that the Sinclairs were then too few to do anything but by leadership, of which they proved themselves thoroughly capable.

Of their men, the Macivers or first Caithness Campbells (the second being the near relations of the laird of Glenorchy, who all came to the county after 1675), a good deal is known. This by "*Leckmeln*," though not entirely correct, is remarkably illustrative, especially of the position of the Macivers in the county:—"William Campbell, heritable sheriff-clerk of Caithness, was of the Maciver branch of the clan, and was the eldest son of Donald Campbell or Maciver, merchant, Thurso. William was baptized 25th October, 1647. He had two sisters and two brothers, the younger of the latter being John, baptized 10th April, 1672, who received the appointment of commissary of Caithness, and became proprietor of Castlehill. William was

twice married, first to Elizabeth daughter of James Murray of Pennyland, who bore him one son Donald, writer in Thurso, who left no issue; and second to Helen Mowat, by whom he had six sons, the eldest being James, baptized 6th November, 1685, who succeeded his father as heritable sheriff-clerk of Caithness, and who acquired the estate of Lochend in Dunnet. He was twice married, first to Mary Sinclair of Forss, without issue, and next to Isabella, daughter of the Rev. James Oswald, minister of Watten, of the Auchincruive and Scotstown family. James's son, William of Lochend, was served heir to his father 16th June, 1768, but died without issue, and was succeeded by his brother Oswald, served heir 15th March, 1770, but who died without issue in 1776, and was succeeded by Alexander Campbell, son of Alexander, whose father was William, second son of William, first sheriff-clerk. He sold Lochend in 1778 to Sinclair of Freswick, and as he left no issue, it is believed the male line of the family of Donald, father of the sheriff-clerk, became extinct. The family are considered to have been cadets of the Quoycrook and Duchernan Macivers, of whom the chief was the late Principal Campbell of Aberdeen. They were known sometimes patronymically as the Macivers Buy. Branches in Caithness were those of Dorrery, Brubster, Thurso (younger family), Brawlbin, Shurrery, Braehour, Lieurary, all connected with the Quoycrook family. Some other families are believed to descend from the Maciver Campbells of Leckmeln in Ross-shire, and which ceased to be a landed family towards the close of the 17th century. The last of the family in possession was



Murdoch Maciver, served heir to Donald Roy his father on 22nd December, 1663. This Murdoch is alleged to have had a son Evander, who went to Thurso about 1680, and settled there in trade. Other members of the family are understood to have preceded him, but there are descendants of the family in the Aird, Kilmorack, and Contin. The writer is a descendant of Donald Roy, by his son Alexander, who fought at Worcester, and who subsequently settled in the Aird, where he has descendants who will be heads of the family of Leckmeln, failing direct descendants of Evander of Thurso." Let follow good sound criticism of "Leckmeln's" interesting passage, by "Mag":—"There is some mistake about the family of William Campbell, sheriff-clerk of Caithness about 1690, as he was not a native of the county. . . . John Campbell, commissary of Caithness, was not William's brother, nor a son of Donald Campbell, merchant in Thurso. On the 1st of March, 1692, the office of commissary of Caithness was conferred on Mr. John Campbell, son to the laird of Barbreck, in Argyleshire." There can be no doubt that he was one of the importations of Lord Glenorchy, and of altogether another kind of lineage from the Macivers, who were merely clansmen. It has been said that they took refuge in Caithness from a commission of fire and sword against them for crimes in their own country, which was so usual with clans then as to be not much, if anything, of dishonour. The Macivers could have no pretensions to kinsmanship to the ruling Campbells of their time. They were simply aboriginal Celts of the west, who came to the north by

force or choice to get holdings under tacksmen, for fighting and other *ad libitum* services. The later Campbells because of their kinship to Glenorchy had tacks, chamberlainships or stewardships, and legal offices in the county ; and some of their grave-stones yet (see one in Reay), show that they all bore arms as gentlemen.

It can be understood how bitterly the Teutonic Gunns would feel towards the Celtic Macivers, who came strangers into the counties of which the Gunns, with their branches, formed the largest portion of the population. Were it not for the Abrach Mackays, who formed a thorn in the side of the houses of Mackay and Gordon, the Gunns of Caithness and Sutherland would have made short work of the earlier Campbells by mere weight of numbers. But the involved state of persons and things gave the latter their field, and bravely enough they held it, under the guidance of the Earl of Caithness and his handful of kinsmen. The numerous stones on the western border of the county as marks of fights, have their clear explanation in the warfare of the Mackays (especially the Abrachs), the Gunns, and the Maciver Campbells. It must not be forgotten that the Macivers were first taken to the county to oppose the Sinclair family's just claims on Lord Oliphant's encumbered and appraised properties, the Gunns being then the earl's faithful henchmen. Indeed, the name was almost synonymous with Caithnessmen ; and that the few stranger Sinclairs had organised them to hold their own, especially against the marauding Mackays, was long fully appreciated by the Gunns.

When Lord Oliphant was making his last efforts to keep his hold on his Caithness estate, he invited the Macivers to come to help him with the strong hand. The proof of this is to be found in the Privy Council records, in which, 1583, there appears a protest by Lord Oliphant against George, the new and fifth earl, getting the justiciaryship of Caithness, Sutherland, and Strathnaver, after the death of the fourth earl. If he too should have this office, which implied power of life and property in these provinces, Lord Oliphant said that as to the Oliphants "it would in effect take their lands within Caithness and the service of their own tenants from them, and make their places to be possessed by the clan Gunn and others, contrary to law and reason." He gained his immediate object, but he was fighting a losing battle. Unfortunately for the Gunns, they lost their loyalty to their natural friends, through love of the semi-independence of a half-outlaw clan; and in time the Macivers (professed outlaws, or "broken" men, as they were then called) had to be conciliated to take their rightful position as genuine Caithnessmen. The few years after 1583 saw this change quite completed, and the battle of Aldgown in 1586 lost the Gunns all chance of reconciliation with their kin of the earldom of Caithness. Henceforth they had to try to sit between three stools, with results tragical exceedingly. The refusals of George, earl of Caithness, to join the project of extermination by which the Gordons intended to settle the clan Gunn difficulty, can easily be understood in this light. He had even so many Gunns as his own "kindly tenants," under different

names, that a revolt of revenge might well have been dreaded ; though there is every mark in Sir Robert Gordon's narrative that the earl felt the Gunns were his friends, to be told of the atrocious designs against them.

Perhaps the most notorious event in the history of the Gunns, as treated by Sir Robert Gordon, was the burning of Lord Forbes's cornyard at Sandside in 1615. He describes the contentions between the Earl of Caithness and his near relatives of the Dunbeath, Reay, and Downreay family, and tries to make out that the earl instigated the burning from vexation that George Sinclair, the last baron of Dunbeath, willed away his estates to his brother-in-law Lord Forbes. The earl was sheriff of the county, and had opportunities, if he chose, of distressing the new proprietor and his tenants :—" In the end, Lord Forbes resolved to dwell in Caithness, thereby to keep his men and tenants from the Earl of Caithness's oppression, which he thought he might easily do having the house of Sutherland to assist him. During Lord Forbes's stay then in that county (which was not long, being his first journey thither), the Earl of Caithness dealt earnestly with John Robson, *alias* John Gunn, chieftain of the clan Gunn in Caithness, and persuaded him to invade Lord Forbes in passing the mountain Ord. But Lord Forbes coming away a day sooner than was expected, that course failed them. So Earl George, perceiving that he could not thus effect his purpose, resolved to work secretly by some other means to make Lord Forbes in the end weary of these lands. He thought the clan Gunn the fittest

instruments, not only because they were the most resolute men in his county, and ready for any desperate action, but also because they depended most upon the Earl of Sutherland and Mackay, of whom they had some lands; so that if the matter should afterwards come in question, the houses of Sutherland and Mackay might rather be suspected for anything the clan Gunn should commit than himself, who after his service in Orkney had obtained a pardon for all his bygone crimes, and as every man conceived had taken himself to a new course of life." This is not the time to reply to Gordon's abusive and interested impertinence, but it is worth noting that Forbes, himself, and Mackay were near relatives, scheming all that they could to get possessions in Caithness, and that Earl George, by the unfortunate defection of the last Sinclair of Dunbeath of the old line, from the interests of his lineage, was placed almost at the mercy of the Gordons and Irish Mackay-Forbeses. On all precedents, he had the right claim to Dunbeath, Downreay, Sandside, and the other numerous estates of the Dunbeath Sinclair family; and Lord Forbes had practically swindled the properties into his possession by gaining on George of Dunbeath when he had him in his own house, George Sinclair being without the characteristic energy and loyalty to family of his kin. Quarrels there were, but it was George's position in Lord Forbes's hands which gave too good reason to the Earl of Caithness to believe that undue influence had been used. It was a deathbed will on which Lord Forbes came into the county, and no wonder he did not find plain sailing. But this story in its higher aspect

does not belong to the Gunns, and so much is said to warn as to the tutor of Sutherland's gratuitous and often false charges against those he tried to circumvent. That this is not a partial opinion is shown by the fact that the historian of the house of Mackay bitterly resents and eagerly tries to disprove the wholesale charges Gordon makes against his own relations, the Mackays of Strathnaver.

With the Sandside affair Gordon goes on thus :—"Earl George dealt earnestly with John Robson, *alias* Gunn, chieftain of the clan Gunn in Caithness, and with his brother Alexander Gunn, whose father he had hanged in the year of God 1586. He dealt also with their cousin-german, Alexander Georgeson, *alias* Gunn, the son of him that was taken prisoner at Leckmeln, and who was pursued at Strathy by James Sinclair of Murkle the year 1594. He invited them all to Castle Sinclair. First he tried Alexander Georgeson, *alias* Gunn, apart, shewing him that Lord Forbes had got footing in Caithness greatly to his prejudice and discredit, which he could not endure ; and that he had made choice of him to employ him in a piece of service which after performance he should recompense to the uttermost. He desired him to remember how well and bountifully he had always dealt with him from the beginning, and that henceforth he would deal better with him than he had ever done before. Alexander Georgeson, *alias* Gunn, promised the earl all the furtherance he could, to the very hazard of his life and blood. The earl asked whether he would undertake to burn the corn of Sandside pertaining to William Innes, servitor to Lord Forbes.

The gentleman being astonished at his demand (never imagining that such a matter should have been put to his charge), refused the service ; yet to satisfy the Earl of Caithness, he told him that he would at his command do his best to slay William Innes, but that he would by no means undertake the corn, wherein was neither generosity nor valour. The earl desired him to keep the matter secret, and so they parted."

A curious *possibility* has been raised with regard to the lineage of William, on the ground of the following note to Sir Walter Scott's "*Lady of the Lake*":—

*"The Douglas, like a stricken deer,  
Disowned by every noble peer.*

—St. XII., p. 102.

"The exiled state of this powerful race is not exaggerated in this and subsequent passages. The hatred of James V. against the race of Douglas was so inveterate, that numerous as their allies were, and disregarded as the regal authority had usually been in similar cases, their nearest friends, even in the most remote parts of Scotland, durst not entertain them, unless under the strictest and closest disguise. James Douglas, son of the banished Earl of Angus, afterwards well known by the title of Earl of Morton, lurked, during the exile of his family, in the north of Scotland, under the assumed name of James Innes, otherwise *James the Grieve* (i.e., Reeve or Bailiff.) 'And as he bore the name,' says Godscroft, 'so did he also execute the office of a grieve or overseer of the lands and rents, the corn and cattle of him with whom he lived.' From the habits of frugality and observation which he acquired in this humble situation, the historian traces that intimate acquaintance with popular character which enabled him to rise so high in the state, and that honourable economy by which he

repaired and established the shattered estates of Angus and Morton.—*History of the House of Douglas.* Edinburgh, 1743."

It is unnecessary to follow the Sandside tale much farther, as Calder and others have amply dealt with it, not only on Sir Robert Gordon's information, but through state and private documents. New passages are, however, always welcome. A letter from the Lord Elphinstone MSS., recently examined by the Royal Historical Commission, is of great and pertinent interest, by giving insight at a particularly critical moment. It is easy to understand how such a document could have found its way into the Elphinstone charter chest. John, earl of Sutherland, was married in February, 1600, to Anna, daughter of Lord Elphinstone, who for some time had the office of Lord High Treasurer of Scotland. Sir Robert Gordon's letter might have found its way thus to its present keeping-place. But there is also another way by which it may have gone there, and this has closer relation to Caithness. The second daughter was married on the same day of February, 1600, to Arthur, Lord Forbes, to whom the Reay, Dounreay, and Dunbeath estates were conveyed by George Sinclair, their proprietor. What plottings and counter plottings went on during the years 1610 to 1628, when Lord Forbes sold all and left the county, are illustrated well by the letter. Even more than Sir Robert's "History" does it give the meaning of rival houses in their wars of sword and of legal processes. It needs no skill to see how much the Gunns have to do with the document. The fear for the lives of some ostensible "outlaws for old matters," has quite



intelligible reference to members of the clan, though further opportunity of paying off scores may be also meant.

*“Dunrobin, the 22nd of February, 1618.*—Trusty friend, I have heard no word from you since Mr. John Gray's southgoing, to whom I referred divers particulars. I have sent this bearer south to advertise my Lord Elphinstone that Mackay has gone quietly to Caithness, and has spoken and agreed finally with the Earl of Caithness, unknown to my Lord Forbes or any of the house of Sutherland. What effect this agreement may produce is uncertain. But I pray you to remember my Lord Elphinstone or my Lord Kildrummy to speak to my Lord Chancellor or the Clerk of the Council, that there be no commissions granted to Mackay, Murkle, or any other within Caithness, Sutherland, or Strathnaver against any man till we see what this agreement draws to. And if there be any men within Sutherland or Strathnaver that the Council would have, let them charge me or the Earl of Sutherland for them, and we shall produce them, either Sutherland men or Strathnaver men, seeing the Earl of Sutherland is their superior. For we are afraid that Mackay has promised the Earl of Caithness the lives of some Strathnaver men or Sutherland men, whom they may make outlaws for old matters unknown to us. Getting a commission against them, being in Strathnaver, Mackay may easily despatch them. We are most afraid for such as have been truest to this house. If there will be any commission granted, and blood flow thereupon, it will shake the countries loose again. Do herein as you think expedient.

“There is a countryman of mine called Donald MacDonald MacEan, in Moy, who is at the horn for not finding of lawborrows. I have written to young Sidderay, if he be in Edinburgh, to give you money to get the gift of his escheat. The hornings and all are sent to young Sidderay with this bearer. If he be not in Edinburgh, you shall receive them, and pass the gift; and whatsoever it costs you, I shall send it to you with the first convenience. Let the donator be George Murray in Laydie, and if you get

the gift passed, send home the gift with the summons of declarator by this bearer. I entreat you do your diligence in this, and if it be requisite let my Lord speak to the Treasurer herein. Let no man know but yourself and my Lord that young Sidderay knows of the matter. I long to hear what effect the commission takes. We hear all goes by transaction with the party, and that such as give good augmentations get heritable tacks. I expect daily for word from Mr. John Gray, and that you write at length with him of all things. I have written to my Lord Elphinstone to advise if any tacksman during his tacks may cut and sell or destroy the woods of the land that he has in tack from the heritor, by the heritor's own consent. Whereof you shall advise and advertise me. I know he may cut to his own use and bigging.

"Put in the gift of escheat 1000 merks which Donald MacDonald MacEan has in wadset upon the town of Moy from the Earl of Sutherland, together with 500 merks which he has in John Gordon of Backies's hands on the lands of Craygie. Which thousand pounds shall be specially nominated, and his goods and gear in general. I lippen for my Lord Elphinstone's coming north in March.

"If Sidderay be not in Edinburgh, deliver these letters as they are directed, and send Sidderay's letters home again, with Mr. John Gray's also, if he be returned home. Thus I end, resting always, your assured friend, SIR ROBERT GORDON.

"Ask an answer of Macleod's letter back again with this bearer.

"If MacDonald MacEan in Moy has sent south to Walter Hay to get the gift of his own escheat, and that you see Walter Hay or any other dealing for it, you shall cause my Lord Elphinstone to be the more earnest with the Treasurer to get it. Do your diligence herein as you would do the Earl of Sutherland a good turn.

"I have sent you herewith the contract between Duffus and me. You shall cause to register it, and send me the extract back again.

“ There are some of this country men who are charged for the money that they promised to John Crawford for adultery ; whereon they gave their bonds, and received Crawford's tickets for remissions. They are at the horn, and are willing to pay the money providing they get remissions. Therefore I pray you to cause my Lord Elphinstone to speak to the Treasurer that they may get remissions, and the money shall be paid when I go to Edinburgh at Whitsunday.”

A good deal of this has not direct relation to the subject, but it is of use to see the tutor of Sutherland's hand at work in scheming about money and estate affairs.

The *Acta Parliamentorum* begin in 1124, and there is no mention of a Gunn till 1647, which is plain proof that till then the Gunns had not ruling importance. On one of the committees of war of the latter date the first appears :—“ *Item*, For the sheriffdoms of Caithness and Sutherland promiscuously, the estates nominate and appoint for the committees of war, within the sheriffship of Caithness and Sutherland promiscuously, Francis Sinclair of Northfield, Sir James Sinclair of Canisbay, Sir John Sinclair of Dunbeath, James Sinclair of Brims, William Sinclair of Ratter, John Cunningham of Brownhill, Captain William Innes, Major James Innes, William Sinclair of Dun, Charles Calder of Lynegar, David Munro, commissary of Caithness, John Murray of Pennyland, Patrick Sinclair of Ulbster, and Alexander Mullikin, for Caithness ; the Earl of Sutherland, Sir Alexander Sutherland of Duffus, Sir John Gordon of Embo, Robert Gray of Sordell, Robert Murray of Spaneydale, Alexander Gray of Opisdale, Alexander Gun of Calelnan” [Killernan]

“Robert Gray of Ballone, Alexander Gordon of Carrel, and the provost of Dornoch of the time, for Sutherland; and appoint nine to be a quorum.” At risk of anticipating, references to Gunns in the acts of parliament of Scotland may be here noticed. In Charles the Second’s reign, date 7th February, 1649, an act and commission in favour of the Earl of Sutherland, against Hugh (the son of Alexander) and others was passed. On 15th February, 1649, an act was made for putting the kingdom in a posture of defence, the Covenanters being then supreme. Among the commissioners and on the committees of war appointed, are to be found, under the sheriffdom of Sutherland, the names of Alexander Gunn of Killernan and John Gunn of Barraboll.

But on the 7th February of the same year, the names of these same two Gunns appear in the *Acta Parliamentorum Caroli II.*, in connection with a narrative of events so characteristic of that time in Caithness, Sutherland, and Strathnavernia as to demand its full quotation. It will be remembered that the fight at St Peter’s Church, Thurso, between Sir James Sinclair of Murkle and the Strathnaver company under Neil Mackay and an Irish soldier-wanderer called Macalister, took place in 1649. The following will aid towards understanding that troublesome affair, which cost the marauding Mackays more in blood than they had expected:—“Act and commission in favour of the Earl of Sutherland against Hugh Macalister” [the soldier killed some months afterwards at Thurso by a shot from Sir James Sinclair’s footman’s gun, the bullet being a

silver button from his master's coat] "and others. The estates of parliament taking to their consideration the manifold wrongs, oppressions, and thefts done and committed by the persons undernamed, namely, Hugh Macalister, Neil Williamson in Achness, Neil Abrach" [with many others not to be distinguished through the Celtic patronymic system], "and especially the theftuous stealing, concealing, receiving, and awaytaking by themselves and their associates, broken and lawless men, rebels and fugitives, from John, earl of Sutherland, and his tenants of his lands in Strathnaver, Breachat, and Tirriachat, in the years of God 1645 and 1646, five hundred cows and oxen, six hundred sheep, two hundred horses and mares, and three hundred head of goats pertaining to the said earl and his tenants; and from Sir John Gordon of Embo, knight, forth out of his lands of Achness, occupied by himself and his tenants, one hundred cows, thirty head of great oxen, and forty horses and mares pertaining to the said Sir John Gordon of Embo, knight. For these aforesaid thefts, the aforementioned persons were lawfully charged to find caution to his highness's justice and his deputies, acted in the book of adjournal, that they should compear before his majesty's justice and his deputies, and underlie his highness's laws for the same, in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, upon the 13th day of July, 1648. For their disobedience of the said charges, they were upon 7th July, 1648, orderly denounced rebels and put to the horn, as the letter of horning directed thereanent (executions and endorsations thereof duly registered, conformable to the act of parliament) at more length purports; under

process of which hurning, the aforementioned persons have lain and abode continually since then, and thereby contemn and vilipend his majesty's authority and laws, and continue in their thefts, wrongs, and oppressions throughout the country, and will not be repressed or restrained, so that within short space the country will be utterly wrecked, wasted, and undone, and the said lands laid waste, and the inhabitants made unable to dwell therein for fear and danger of their lives, in high and proud contempt of his majesty's authority and laws, and in evil example of others likewise to contemn and vilipend and commit such thefts and oppressions, except timeous remedy be provided therefor. And also the said estates of parliament considering that no secret council is sitting now, who use to grant and direct our commissions for punishing, restraining, and repressing such wrongs and oppressions and thefts, therefore the said estates of parliament, by these presents, give, grant, and commit full power, commission, and warrant to Francis Sinclair of Northfield, Sir John Sinclair of Dunbeath, John Cunningham of Brownhill, Alexander Gray of Opisdale, Alexander Gunn of Killernan, David Munro, commissary of Caithness, Robert Dunbar of Hempriggs, John Gunn of Borrowboll, William Gordon of Doill, Angus Mackenzie of Rogart, Alexander Gordon of Siddora, Hugh Gordon of Moy, Donald Gunn of ..... , Alexander Fraser of Lyme, John Sutherland of Clyne, and John Gordon of Rossell, or any five of them as a quorum, to search, seek, take, and apprehend the aforesaid persons, rebels and fugitives, wherever they can be apprehended;

and, if they can be got, to put them to the knowledge of an assize for the crimes aforesaid, and to minister justice upon them and execute them to the death, and if need be to raise fire and sword and to burn their houses and slay themselves in case they make opposition or resistance in the taking or apprehending. And for better putting this commission into execution, with power to convocate and raise the country thereabout in arms, with guns, pistols, and all sorts of ammunition and armour necessary, and to that effect to affix, affirm, hold, and as oft as need be to continue justice courts and great clerks, serjeants, dempsters or executioners, and all other officers and members of court needful. Also to summon one inquest or more of sufficient persons, least suspect and who best know the verity in the said matter, to pass upon the assize of the aforementioned persons, rebels and fugitives, each person under the pain of 100 merks. And, generally, all and sundry other things necessary to do, exercise, and use accordingly concerning the premises, as freely in all respects and conditions as any other commissioners have done, or might have done, at any time heretofore in the like matter. Whereanent these presents shall be to them a sufficient warrant, with this special provision and declaration also, that in case the aforesaid persons, rebels and fugitives, or any of them or their associates, happen to be killed, burnt, or slain in the taking and apprehending, that, nevertheless, the said commissioners and the persons who assist and concur with them to put this present commission into execution, shall incur no danger in their bodies, lives, lands, goods, gear, nor estate, for the same, in any time

coming. And ordain the said commission to be further extended with all clauses needful."

If this document may be tiresome from its endless verbosity, it nevertheless exhibits the state of northern society with undoubted truthfulness. The more recent clearances of Strathnaver were child's play to the burnings and slayings which had previously occurred in that beautiful valley. It is noticeable to find no fewer than three leading Gunns on the side of order in 1649. The first Lord Reay, Donald Mackay, had sold and wadsetted the greatest part of his estates to carry on his military affairs on the Continent, and to support Charles I.; but he changed to the Covenanters, and further muddled his financial affairs. His son John, the second Lord Reay, was royalist throughout; and his great hope was to recover all the estates by force, especially the portions that John Gordon, earl of Sutherland, held. If the Marquis of Montrose had been successful in 1645, this would have been effected; but his defeat at Philiphaugh moderated the hopes of the Mackays. Montrose's soldiers, many of whom were Irish, took refuge in Strathnaver, and some attempt was made in 1645 and 1646, and down to 1649, to re-establish the ruined John Mackay, Lord Reay, in his patrimony, which had been acquired through purchase and otherwise by the Earl of Sutherland, who was a Covenanter and supporter of the English parliament against the Stuarts. On 18th January, 1649, the estates of parliament of Scotland ordered John, then Master of Reay, and others, to be summoned at the crosses of



Inverness and Dornoch at the instance of the Earl of Sutherland and Sir John Gordon, one of the new Sutherlandshire proprietors, because "there is no sure access neither to their persons nor dwelling-places." On 3rd February, 1649, an act was passed in favour of the Earl of Sutherland and twelve other proprietors of that county, who had suffered losses by the Mackays, that they should not have to pay the national tax to uphold the army, because they had to maintain a guard of 400 men "for repressing and gainstanding the wrongs, oppressions, and robberies, intromissions with and uptaking of the rents and duties of the supplicants, committed and done by Donald, Lord Reay, and John, Master of Reay, his son, accompanied with their friends and a great number of Irish rebels whose number increases daily." The 400 merks payable monthly by the shire was remitted to the earl for December 1648, and also for January and February 1649. On consideration of wasted land £36 per month was allowed him. On the 9th March, 1649, another act was passed in his favour because of disturbances then in Sutherland, 500 bolls of meal being granted for support of soldiers, a letter to be written to General Leslie to help a sconce or fort to be built in Strathnaver for a garrison. Next day the earl was made Lord Privy Seal for Scotland. An act in his favour, passed on 16th March, 1649, was grounded on his supplication that he had been "eleven years previously engaged at his own charges in the state's service (since the beginning of this work of reformation) against the public enemies of the church and kingdom, with the hazard of his life and the loss of

many of his people. He says also that he was robbed and despoiled by Lord Reay and the Master of Reay, and their adherents both in Sutherland and Strathnaver, to the amount of £50,000 Scots. In 1647 the parliament gave him £3000 sterling out of the money the English parliament paid to the Scotch, and he also had precept for £15,000 Scots to help his military necessities, but only received £4000 Scots. "November of last year, 1648, the Master of Reay and his adherents violently took up 5000 merks of rent belonging to the supplicant, and they threaten to fall on Sutherland, so that he has had to support 400 soldiers for defence since last August, who cost monthly 200 bolls of meal and £1000 Scots, ruining his tenants and vassals." The parliament gave him £10,900 remaining due of the £15,000, the money to be got out of confiscations, &c., north of the Spey. On 14th June, 1649, an act was passed in his favour to fortify some place in Strathnaver. He says that "for the insolences and incursions in the north country, and especially Strathnaver, they are not able to live nor subsist in Sutherland and Caithness, unless some means of ready help be found, such as a fencible place in Strathnaver, to protect both Sutherland and Caithness." He was allowed his request, and 100 men were to garrison the new fort. The following, of date 31st July, 1649, is from the *Acta Parliamentorum*:—"The garrison of Strathnaver, consisting of 100 men and complete officers of a company, their monthly pay according to the establishment extends to £1114 13s. 4d., to be paid as follows, forth of the maintenance of the shire of Caithness £724 17s. 11d.,

the maintenance of Sutherland, £439 4s. 9d., the burgh of Dornoch, £27, which pays the garrison, and £77 2s. 4d. remains to be paid by the Earl of Sutherland." Another compensation act was passed for the earl and Sir Robert Gordon of Embo on 4th August. It was proved that their losses by John, now Lord Reay, was for the earl and his vassals £20,937 8s. 8d., and for Sir Robert £10,862 2s. 4d., both Scots money. The demand was that the sums should be realised out of Lord Reay's property only. The parliament decided that Lord Reay should not get out of the prison of Edinburgh tolbooth till he he paid back uplifted rents, restored the lands, and did all justice. On 24th December, 1650, the parliament gave up paying for the garrison of Strathnaver, allowing the earl if he chose to continue it at his own expense. On 16th March, 1649, the Earl of Caithness had the same terms as the Earl of Sutherland about the Mackays and the Irishes in their incursions. In June 1656 the Council advised Cromwell to make Lord Strathnaver Privy Seal in room of his father. From 1656 until 1659 the earl was General Monk's warm supporter.

All these visions of disorder and terror in Caithness, Strathnaver, and Sutherland have only an indirect relation to the Gunns, who had before this period practically lost importance, even as a clan, their chiefs taking the side of the landed proprietors, as expressed by their combination with the Earl of Sutherland against the law-breaking Mackays. But being nearly the last glimpse of the Gunns under the already dying clan system, it is of some importance. In the *Acta Parliamentorum's*

final pages, shortly before the Union, Donald Gunn of Badinloch is a commissioner of supply for Sutherlandshire in 1704; and it may be added, in the light of the same lineage, that George Manson of Bridgend was a commissioner for Caithness that year. On November 9th, 1706, an act for special supply was passed at Edinburgh, Robert Henderson of Achalender being, with others, appointed to execute it in Caithness. This closes the parliamentary notices of the Gunns, but there are other state records in which they appear, though sparsely.

Thomas Gunn, *alias* Robson, was on November 9th, 1654, served heir of Thomas Robson, his "gudser," or grandfather, in tenements in Thurso. The following occurs among the Sutherland inquisitions, of date 26th April, 1670:—*Joannes Gun haeres Alexandri Gun de Killernan patris in villis et terris de Navidaill terris Balnavaliache cum decimis garbalibus. E. 3s. 4d.*—"John Gunn, heir of Alexander Gunn of Killernan, his father, in the townships and lands of Navidale and the lands of Balnavaliache, with the tenth sheaves. Extent, 3s. 4d." Among the general inquisitions is this suggestive record of 15th June, 1678:—*Domina Anna Barbara Gune relicta Francisci de Veltes haeres Domini Gulielmi Baronis de Gunn Gubernatoris de Staffenadg et Dirlet quondam designati Colonelli Wilielmi Gunn patris*—"Mistress Ann Barbara Gunn, widow of Francis De Veltes, heir of Mr. William Gunn, laird of Gunn, governor of Staffenadg and Dirlet, formerly designated Colonel William Gunn, her father." This is probably the General Sir William Gunn of

Gordon of Sallagh's pages. On 27th August, 1634, at the battle of Norlingin, Germany, fought between the King of Hungary and the princes of the Roman or German empire, he commanded the Scottish Brigade, of which Lord Reay was the creator. He gained credit by his skill of retiring in this fight, his rank being then colonel. Born in Westgarty, Sutherlandshire, he was the second son of John Gunn (Robson) who died in 1619, and went to Denmark in one of Lord Reay's earlier levies. He commanded 1000 musketeers and two regiments of horse on the side of the Swedes at the victory of Vitstock, in Germany, September, 1636; indeed, he led the van at this battle, at which he was wounded, having repulsed eight charges. In the Scottish wars of Charles I., he was lieutenant to Viscount Aboyne, commander-in-chief of the royal troops, and was in the defeat at Bridge of Dee, Aberdeen, the Covenanters victors. In 1639, Colonel Gunn was knighted, and on the king's return to London was appointed gentleman of the privy chamber. He went back to the Continent, and in 1643 he was in the imperial service in Italy as major-general and baron of the holy Roman empire. He married a rich lady of Ulm, and the Barbara Gunn of the inquisition is their daughter. It would be interesting to find out where the Gunn is (possibly around Castle Gunn) of which he was laird, and also how he was governor of Dirlot Castle. Dirlot in his time belonged to John Mackay, brother of Lord Reay, and to John's son Hugh, who in 1647 gave rights of heirship to the first Dunbeath Sinclairs in their Brims branch. The Gunns of Westgarty may have been

underholders (practically proprietors) or tacksmen of Dirlot. One genealogical tree has Sir Wm. as son of John of Dirlot of 1618. There was a much later Colonel Wm. in the Dutch service, who died in 1782, son of Captain Alex. of Badenloch of 1764, son of Donald of Killernan, who had a son Colonel Wm. also. The baron was "the Earl of Sutherland's cousin."

One of the most valuable references in the Scottish state records to the Gunns is the following, from the general inquisitions, of date 27th January, 1663 :—*Gulielmus Mansone alias Hendirson haeres Davidis Mansone alias Hendersone in Brabsterdorane, partris*—"William Manson or Henderson, heir of David Manson or Henderson, in Brabsterdorrان, his father." There is a notice also of John Manson, heir of Mr. John Manson of Hollowtofts, his grandfather ; but nothing seems to come out of this of a direct kind. The above quotation shows the entire question of the Gunn lineage in a new aspect. Henderson, author of "Notes on Caithness Family History," was of the Brabsterdorrان Hendersons, and there is no doubt at all that they were Gunns. The numerous Mansons of Caithness are now also fixed as of the same lineage. Their steady holding of the best public offices in Wick (see its burgh records), and in Thurso, shows that they were not the least energetic branch of the Gunns.

To complete the chief male relationships of the so-called clan, it is now only necessary to note the origin and history of the Swansons, who were the same line as that from which the Gunns branched. After this it will be seen that the Gunn

stock in all its branches has decidedly the best title to be considered the genuine Norse Caithnessmen. At early periods like the eighth or ninth century they also were strangers of Orkney and Norway; but if merely long residence gave prescriptive rights, the Keiths, Dunbars, and Sinclairs have, comparatively to the Gunns, much less claim over Caithness soil. They were strangers of Scotland, England, and Normandy, who gained possessions in the north by marriage. It may be considered something to be of the older Caithness inhabitants, even though of less dominant caste than the later rulers. But Gunns and Swansons, as descended from Gunnus and from Sweyn, the viking of Buchollie Castle, Freswick, have as high a genealogy as the more recognised feudal families. Torfaeus gives numerous facts about their ancestors. From his catalogue in *Orcades*, *Lib. I., cap. 20*, of those inhabiting Orkney in the time of Earl Paul, this comes:—"Olaf inhabited Gairsay, an energetic man, and of the highest acceptance with Earl Paul. His wife was Asleif, descended of an illustrious family, and a heroine in disposition. Their children were Waltheof, Gunn, Swan, and a daughter Ingigerd. Each had a careful education, and were instructed in those arts which at that time were held of greatest value." Of the Swansons a separate account should be given hereafter, although they are of exactly the same lineage as the Gunns; their respective histories being different, through Norse or Lowland as against acquired Highland habits, owing to places of settlement. Both could be called Olafson for surname, the equivalent of Macaulay,

if Lord Macaulay's biographer, Sir George Trevelyan, M.P., and others, are to be believed, "Aulay" being "Olaf." But it would be too sore a blow to Celtic enthusiasm if the brilliant essayist were found to be after all a Norseman, and possibly a Gunn or Swanson. Some local considerations give countenance to the supposition. Ulbster belonged to the Gunns at a very early period, its name implying that Olaf held it, "Olaf's *terra*," "Olaf's land," being the equivalent to the "Ulbster" of more modern pronunciation. "Captain F. W. L. Thomas, R.N., F.S.A., Scot., says that the clan Aulay takes its name from the Gaelic form of the Scandinavian Olaf; that thirty of this name are registered in the Icelandic Land-book, and that thirty-five are noticed in the 'Annals of the Four Masters.' According to the mythical history of Lewis, the Macaulays are the descendants of Amhlaebh, one of the twelve sons of Olvir Rosta, whose authentic history is given in the Orkneyinga Saga, and who is otherwise said to have been the eldest son of that Norse King of the Isles who had the kingdom given to him by a son of Kenneth M'Alpin. The want of any real tradition as to the first of the Macaulays has been supplied by historical induction. In 1188 Reginald, son of Gottred, became king of Man, and his brother Olaf had Lewis in appanage. In 1226 Olaf became king of Man and the Isles, but there is no tradition whatever of him in the Lewis, and there is historical proof that a Macaulay was settled in the island long before his time. It is recorded in the Orkneyinga Saga that Gunni Olafson (that is, Macaulay), the brother of Swein of Gairsay, was



expelled from the Orkneys by Earl Harald, and fled to the Lewis, where he was received by the chief Liotolf, who was, no doubt, the first of the Macleods. The traditions of the Mackenzies show that the Macaulays were once dominant in Lochbroom, and this is confirmed by the fact that Ullapool is an old Norse name, meaning 'the homestead of Olaf.' Captain Thomas quotes largely from Dr. G. Mackenzie's manuscript 'History of the Mackenzies,' and the Earl of Cromartie's 'Genealogy' of the same family, the 'Chronicle of Ross,' and other incidental sources of the history of the Macaulays, subjecting the whole to a critical examination, so as to extract from them a consistent history of the Macaulays in Ross-shire. He gives a careful and elaborate *resume* of the traditional history of the Lewis clan Macaulay, whose name, in consequence of the genius of one of its members, is now known throughout the civilised world. Their traditions were drawn from various sources, but chiefly from the work of Donald Morrison of Stornoway, in nine manuscript volumes, of which the first is nearly filled with traditions of the Macaulays." The Celtic view may be exhibited by the words of a member of the clan Iverach or Maciver or Campbell:—"In the excellent little book of notes issued by Mr. Mackenzie of Findon, introductory to the sheets of genealogies, I notice at page 15 that he speaks of the Macivers, Macaulays, &c., as being Scandinavians. I do not think there is any evidence for this. In the case of the Macivers I am satisfied that it is pure assumption. Principal Campbell, the historian of the Macivers, assumes them to be

Scandinavian, because the name 'Iver' or 'Iamhiar' is, he thinks, not Celtic. But this is not reasoning, and there have been too many groundless attempts made to rob us of our superior native descent." It is worth noting here that these Campbells of Duchernan, Argyle, and of Quoycrook, Caithness, were represented by Dr. P. C. Campbell, Principal of Aberdeen University, and that their motto was *Nunquam obliviscar*, "I will never forget," with, below the shield, *Per crucem ad lucem*, "By the cross to the light." There is no end to wanderings in this kind of ethnological controversy, and luckily its usefulness does not compel further efforts. For the earls of Orkney Olaf held the prefectureship of Duncansbay. This was being ruler of as much of Caithness as could be held by strength and diplomacy. Canisbay is either a shortening of Duncansbay, or it is Gunnsby, the fief or estate of the Gunn.

Among the British Museum MSS. there is some account of an English Gunn in the time of Oliver Cromwell. The committee of sequestration (or rather of confiscation) of the estates of the royalists, appointed by the House of Commons, orders on 3rd July, 1644, Richard Gunn, tenant to Major Pratt in arms against the parliament, to pay his arrears of rent to Colonel Berrow, according to an order of the House of 4th June — "and that Richard Gunn repay £25, which was paid to Pratt, who is in arms, as above."

The following has a lineage and legal rather than local interest:—"Know all men by these presents that I, William Gunn, of London, merchant, do hereby for myself, my heirs,

executors, and administrators, remit, relieve, and forever quit-claim unto John Brand of Edwardstone, in the county of Suffolk, gentleman, administrator of his late brother, Benjamin Brand, deceased, his heirs, executors, and administrators, all and all manner of accounts, and accounts' causes, and causes of account, and accounts, suits, debts, accounts, reckonings, sum and sums of money, covenants, contracts, promises, trespasses, damages, bonds, bills, specialties, judgments, extents, executries, differences, variances, contrarious matters, claims, and demands whatsoever, which against the said John Brand as administrator to the said deceased or other heretofore I have had, now have, or may claim for by reason or in respect of any matter, cause, or thing whatsoever, from the beginning of the world to the day of the date hereof. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, the first day of November *Anno Domini*, 1673, and in the five and twentieth year of the reign of our sovereign lord, Charles the Second, by the grace of God, king of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. Sealed and delivered in the presence of Isaac Brand Esq., and John Chambers & Co., Wm. GUNN." The seal is a shield with a chevron ornamented by three stars or mullets, the hollow beneath of the chevron having a deer's head, and the top of the shield two deers' heads.

In the "New Statistical Account of Scotland," the Rev. Donald Ross of Loth has this:—"The next prominent occurrence was the appearance of about 700 Argyle Highlanders on their march into Caithness in the summer of 1679, in order to

support the king's patent to the earldom of Caithness, which had been granted on 28th June, 1677, in favour of John Campbell of Glenorchy, afterwards created Earl of Breadalbane. This expedition, which terminated in the battle of Altinarnach, to the westward of Wick, is remarkable as indicating the peculiar condition of Scotland at that comparatively recent period, which admitted a subject to arm his vassals and wage war in support of his private legal claims. It was during the march northwards of the men of Glenorchy on this occasion that the well-known quickstep airs, 'The Campbells are coming' and 'The Braes of Glenorchy,' obtained their names. The Gunn of Braemore received the strangers with more than hospitality, and they encamped the night before the battle on his land, the remains of the camp being still pointed out. For this he had considerable favours of wadset from Glenorchy afterwards."

In a note to the "Lady of the Lake," Sir Walter Scott gives a remarkable account of one the Gunns:—

"The following story I can only quote from tradition, but with such an assurance from those by whom it was communicated, as permits me little doubt of its authenticity. Early in the last century, John Gunn, a noted Catheran, or Highland robber, infested Inverness-shire, and levied black mail up to the walls of the provincial capital. A garrison was then maintained in the castle of that town, and their pay (country banks being unknown) was usually transmitted in specie, under the guard of a small escort. It chanced that the officer who commanded this little party was unexpectedly obliged to halt, about thirty miles from Inverness, at a

miserable inn. About nightfall, a stranger in the Highland dress, and of very prepossessing appearance, entered the same house. Separate accommodation being impossible, the Englishman offered the newly-arrived guest a part of his supper, which was accepted with reluctance. By the conversation, he found his new acquaintance knew well all the passes of the country, which induced him eagerly to request his company on the ensuing morning. He neither disguised his business and charge, nor his apprehensions of that celebrated freebooter, John Gunn. The Highlander hesitated a moment, and then frankly consented to be his guide. Forth they set in the morning; and in travelling through a solitary and dreary glen, the discourse again turned on John Gunn. 'Would you like to see him?' said the guide; and without awaiting an answer to this alarming question, he whistled, and the English officer with his small party, were surrounded by a body whose number put resistance out of question, and who were all well armed. 'Stranger,' resumed the guide, 'I am that very John Gunn by whom you feared to be intercepted, and not without cause; for I came to the inn last night with the express purpose of learning your route, that I and my followers might ease you of your charge by the road. But I am incapable of betraying the trust you reposed in me, and having convinced you that you were in my power, I can only dismiss you unplundered and uninjured.' He then gave the officer directions for his journey, and disappeared with his party as suddenly as they had presented themselves."

It is easy to recognise the poet's indebtedness to this tale for his description of Roderick Dhu's dealings with Fitz-James, King James V. of Scotland.

As the "History of the House and Clan of Mackay" by Robert Mackay, writer, Thurso, which was printed for the author at Edinburgh in 1829, is now scarce, some note of what he says of the Gunns may be given, though most of it has

been already quoted from Sir Robert Gordon's "History," his chief authority. Among the subscribers are George Gunn, Rhives; Alexander Gunn, Thurso; John Gunn, Swiney; and Captain William Gunn, Spittal. The battle of Tannach, in which the Gunns were engaged, was about a claim of an Oliphant to a Keith's land. Ingram Gunn or Guyn is witness to a charter of the time of David II., 1329-1370. The drum-head charter to Earl William at Flodden, 1513, was brought to Caithness by a Gunn. From Sir Robert Gordon the combination against the Gunns is told, with account of the battle of Altgown, Ben Griam, in 1586, where 140 Caithnessmen were slain. The narrative is followed to the final overthrow of the Gunns at Loch Broom, to which they retired for aid of relations under another name there. The story of William Gunn, *alias* Macangus, Strathnaver, in 1612, is told from Sir Robert Gordon, for which see Calder also, page 141. The latter does not recount William Lord Berriedale's fruitless pursuit of Gunn to Golval, Halladale, but unfortunate seizure of "Andrew Henderson" as accessory to the escape, nor the imprisonment of the latter in Girnigoe Castle, whence Macangus had saved himself by jumping into the sea. This seizure caused some trouble between Caithness and Strathnaver as well as legal proceedings. On the Sandside corn burning there is much elaboration. John and Alexander Gunn in Strathy, and their cousin Alexander Gunn in Dirlot, were blamed for the arson. Alexander in Dirlot said to Sir Donald Mackay and Sir Robert Gordon that it was Alexander in Strathy and two accomplices who did it.

Lord Forbes summoned the three Gunns before the justiciary lords at Edinburgh in 1616. Lord Caithness, as sheriff of the county, was ordered to send the criminals there, but failed, and in June, 1617, he and they were denounced rebels. Lord Forbes in July, 1616, caused Lord Caithness and Lord Berriedale to be charged personally for the arson. Before the trial, Lords Forbes, Caithness, Berriedale, and Sir Donald entered into a contract of reconciliation, one clause of which was that Caithness had to deliver the Gunns to Forbes. The crown took the case up, and Berriedale was put in the castle of Edinburgh on suspicion, Caithness refusing to appear in August, 1616, and declared rebel and outlaw. Remittance came at great sacrifice to Caithness, one of the clauses again being to deliver the Gunns to justice. Before 1619, Sir Donald and the Earl of Caithness met near Dounreay, and agreed to expel all the Gunns from their lands, as Sir Robert Gordon was using them for his purposes. Sir Donald dispossessed them from Strathy, Dirlot, &c ; Lord Caithness evicted them from his estates ; and Angus Mackay of Bighouse ejected them from Strath Halladale. In the inventory of Caithness writs there is a " mutual discharge between the Earl of Caithness and John Gunn, *alias* Robson, 1616," whom Sir Robert Gordon calls the chief of the Caithness Gunns. There is trouble also in connection with the Sandside burning about a William Gunn, one of the accomplices. Of the officers who went to Germany in 1627 with Lord Reay (the above Sir Donald), there were William Gunn, son of John Gunn *alias* Robson, Strathy, and John Gunn. An account is

given of the seizure of Angus Gunn. In the affray on 11th August, 1668, with pistols in Aberdeenshire, where Hector Mackay of Scourie was slain, the brother of Lieutenant-general Hugh Mackay, commander-in-chief of the forces in Scotland 1689-90 (see his "Life" by John Mackay of Rockfield, published 1836, and General Mackay's own "Memoirs" in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh), John Gunn was present as servant to John Sinclair, laird of Murkle, afterwards Earl of Caithness. In the "First Contest for the Earldom," General Mackay's charge against Murkle and against Sinclair of Dunbeath for the slaughter of his brother Hector is printed. Hugh was at the war in Candia of the Venetians with the Turks when the event happened. He was some time commandant of the Scots Brigade in the service of Holland, and altogether appears to have been one of the most remarkable soldiers of fortune in his very military period. It is probable that John Gunn had a good share in the shooting with pistols at Achcock, just as another Gunn, the servant of Captain Innes, is said to have decided the result of the duel in 1712 of Sandside and Olig (see Calder, page 198). Catherine, sister of Captain William Mackay of Kinloch, great-grandson of the first Lord Reay, married William Gunn, Kildonan, their sons being Angus Gunn and Patrick Gunn. Her sister Elizabeth was married to William Campbell of Isauld. It would be interesting to know if Angus and Patrick were the youths referred to by the Rev. Alex. Pope, Reay, in 1772, when discussing "the tribe called Gunns:"—"Their chieftain is lately dead, and represented by



two boys ; it were to be wished that some generous person would take care of their education"—a quotation already used for general purpose.

In more modern warfare the Gunns have had much fame, and this is an American passage :—" Winchester, 31st July, 1759. I was informed of General Stanwick's orders by your favour of the 28th, and you may be assured I shall comply with them in the strictest manner. As I was told by the commissary that it was in consequence of the general's commands he had ordered in several waggons to carry up provisions, and that would certainly be here and loaded by the third day of August, I have thought it most advisable to wait for them, as the provision will be absolutely necessary, and were I to march now, there would not be a man left to escort them up. As this will be a charge of some consequence, and I expect will not detain my command more than a day or two, I hope the general will approve of my conduct in this affair. I shall see that the commissary and waggon-masters lose no time in dispatching the waggons, nor shall I after delay to execute the general's orders with the greatest punctuality and despatch. I enclose you a return of the number of men I shall march from this place. I thought proper to advise you that Capt. Gust. Du Puty, agent for Indian affairs here, died on the road from Williamsburg 25th inst. with the small-pox. This I mention that if the general expects any Indians, some person be ordered by him to take the direction of them, otherwise they cannot be supplied with necessaries. I am, Sir, your most obedient

servant, JAMES GUNN, Captain, Virginia Regiment." The letter is to Major Tullehon, and is among the MSS. of the British Museum.

It may be useful to give the gist of some recent additions to Gunn history, and first a valuable contribution by D. C. Sutherland, Rianacoill, Forse, on occasion of the publication of an ancient Thurso bill of lading of the "good ship called the William of Banff, whereof under God William Geddes is master skipper, lying at Scrabster Roads, now bound for Leith." It was laden with beef, tongues, butter, salmon, and tallow belonging to Mr. William Sinclair, commissary of Caithness; and the goods were to be delivered to Alexander Rorison, merchant in Thurso, then for the time at Leith. The bill of lading was signed at Thurso on 29th April, 1689. What is of present importance is that Rorison was a Gunn, and the same who for a debt of £1400 Scots put John Sinclair of Ratter to that terrible imprisonment at Inverness in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Of it many details are known. It was his daughter who was the sweetheart of John Gow, the pirate, executed in London, 1726, whose stories, have been told by Sir Walter Scott, and many others. D. C. Sutherland says "he had a son John Rorison, a surgeon, who married in 1713 Christina, daughter of James Sinclair of Uttersquoy," that is Holburn Head. "In 1659 there is a contract of marriage between Thomas Gun or Rorison in Thurdistoft and Jean Innes, daughter of Robert Innes of Oust and Elspet Sinclair, his wife. George Innes, eldest son of Robert, is one of the

witnesses. This would tend to support the contention of the Gunns that the Rorisons were a branch of that clan, and alternately, should it be proved that they were the progenitors of the Henderson family, the contention would still be good, as tradition always affirmed that the Caithness family of that name descended from Henry, a younger son of George Gunn, the king's coroner, killed by the Keiths about 1464. During John, the Master of Caithness's imprisonment in Girnigo Castle, between September 1572 and March 1576, a decret of divorce passed against him in absence in 1575. One of the charges preferred was adultery with Bessie Rorison in Thurso, by whom it is said in the decret he had a son named —— Sinclair. This son is thought to be Henry Sinclair. He married Catherine Sutherland, and his eldest son was named John. By a deed in 1606, Henry appears to have got a portion of Borrowston and Lybster" [Reay] "from his brother Earl George. Between 1563 and the close of the 17th century there was a William Rorison in Wester Nottingham, from whom and Magnus, his brother, in Forse in 1656, it is said the Hendersons, some time in Rumster, Rangag, and Dalvachar, derive descent. William Rorison married Janet Gordon, daughter of Hugh Gordon of Balloan in Sutherlandshire, and widow of James Sutherland of Forse; and presumably by the *curialitas Scotiæ* he is designed of Nottingham, that township being part of the lands provided to his wife in liferent under her first marriage. He had a son David Henderson or Rorison in Gersay, who married in 1690 Margaret, daughter of Colonel Francis Sinclair, son of John of

Assery." A letter follows to George Sutherland, laird of Forse between 1652 and 1679, learned in the humanities, from Will. Rorison, dated Nottingham, 16th February, 1658. His descendants are the Hendersons of Thurso, who "were long at the head of public affairs in the county of Caithness." The Henderson branch of the Gunns would require a special chapter to do them justice. That they have somewhat neglected themselves, while often putting down admirable record of county events and persons, makes the greater claim for them on some future annalist. See Calder's "History of Caithness," second edition, page 183, for a reference from the records of the presbytery to the Alexander Rorison of the bill of lading, who was in 1676 an elder of the church of Thurso.

Above the signature of "Octogenarian" the exploits of Alexander Gunn in Dalnaglaton were of late quaintly recounted. His full name was Alexander, son of George, son of Alexander, son of Alexander, son of Henry; the pedigree, after the Celtic fashion, being thus run up to the coroner's son Henry. He went to school at Bower. His manhood was notorious for height, strength, and courage. The strongest man in Lord Reay's country, Thomas nan Elenan, was beaten by him on Thurso sand at a tug of war with a walking stick, and his deeds with wild cattle at markets were also famous. How he and an Ingram Gunn carried a large Morayshire tombstone in Dirlet churchyard, erected to Alexander Gunn, farmer, Dalganachan, is a traditional feat; and another was his ease of dealing with the lifting stones of Rudh-a-fuder, Loch More. His sister Jane

married Sinclair in Shurery, Reay. The piper of the clan, Hector, came to the marriage from Badloch, Sutherlandshire, and Alexander's brothers, both Donalds, were at the ceremony. It seems that four of the press-gang also looked in for recruits, at the instance of Captain Sutherland of Wester Loch, but failed to add to the red-coats. The captain threatened revenge against Alexander, who had thrashed his intruding soldiers; but on Spittal market Alexander knocked Sutherland's sword out of his hand with a rough stick, and the fight became a drawn one. Captain Sutherland met him soon after with a gun, but it was generosity and friendship on both sides. "There is above the Glutt, on the river Thurso, a place called Essabadienabalg, a fall or cataract, and above the fall there is a gully or gorge where the river runs between two precipitous rocks." Alexander leaped this opening, called Leamcraignacat, 20 feet. The pibroch calling the clan to war closes "Octogenarian's" two letters. Unfortunately no dates are given, so that it is impossible to be quite sure whether the notes about Alexander are personal reminiscences or traditions, but something can be done to rectify the want. In the Thurso parish register there are many Gunns, of whom the following are examples:—William Gunn in Dirlot married to Janet Sinclair in Dorrery on 9th February, 1739, George Sinclair in Torran witness for the man; Donald Gunn married to Elizabeth Sinclair in Dorrery on 18th January, 1740; Barbara Gunn and William Angus, House of Murkle, married 19th March, 1785; Mr William Gunn, merchant in Thurso, witness to the marriage on 1st January, 1796, of Robert Tulloch,

Thurso, to Christian Gunn in Halkirk. John Gunn, one of the Crosskirks, at the earlier period of 21st February, 1707, is a cautioner for the marriage of David Sinclair and Elspet Mackinlay in Crosskirk. In the Halkirk parish register the marriage to which "Octogenarian" refers is given as that of "John Sinclair, parish of Reay, with Janet Gunn, Dalnacletan, 29th December, 1778;" and further proof that Janet was the name, is in the entry of the baptism of George their son on 22nd March, 1782. Alexander Sinclair in Assery was married to Christina Gunn, Achscrabster, on 22nd December, 1780, and on 19th December, 1789, Donald was baptised, lawful son to Francis Swanson in Gerston and Ann Gunn. An enthusiastic Gunn genealogist could take a great deal out of the old Caithness parish registers in Edinburgh, and the above may be sufficient to exhibit the kind of materials there are, and to fix Alexander of Dalnaglaton's time. Perhaps one of the most notable ties of the Gunns by marriage to the dominant family of the county was through Catherine Sinclair, only daughter of Francis, the fiar of Dunn. She married John Gunn of Killnan, who had a tocher or dowry with her of 4000 merks. Her mother was Jean, daughter of "Mr." John Sinclair of Ulbster, the first of that family, who had Ulbster in 1615, sister of Patrick, of Ulbster 1620 *et seq.*

Some papers by Dr. Wm. Gunn, New Hebrides, on Dirlot churchyard, have interesting facts. He says that there was a causeway existing within living memory, which had been used to stem the river to surround Dirlot Castle with water. Of

George the coroner's sons, "James his first son settled in Kildonan ; the descendants of Robert the second son in Braemore ; and those of John the third son in Cattaig, in which Dirlot is situated. From this circumstance the place became one of the burying-grounds of the Gunns, and here the descendants of John were buried for generations." The present wall was built by Gunn, Dale, in 1833. One of the tombstones is over Marcus Gunn, Cattaig, "Big Marcus," born 1647 and died 1734, the first Presbyterian of his branch. His son John's tombstone is near, the date of whose death is 1768. He was married to Janet, daughter of William Campbell of Ousdale ; and his eldest son was Marcus of Dalemore, who though violent in youth became godly in age (see the "Apostle of the North.") "John Gunn, Cattaig, was the ancestor of an influential branch of the clan, represented in Sibster and Dale in Caithness, and Culgower and Glendhu in Sutherlandshire. He died in 1815 at the age of 95." Big Marcus's second son Alexander's tombstone reads, "This is the burial place of Alex. Gunn in Dalmore and Elizabeth Bruce his spouse." An old family bible in possession of his great-grandson, gives his birth in 1664 and death 1741, but the former date is doubted. He had George, who went to Berriedale, James in Camster, William, and John. The following story is told of a George Gunn (not the above) about 1690 :—

"A young man, Alexander Gunn, Dalemore, 18 years of age, was guilty of homicide, and fled to his chief, Donald Crottach, in Kildonan, for protection. He remained for some days living on the bounty of the chief,

when one evening he and two sons of the chief quarrelled. From words they came to blows, and the Cattaig Gunn proving too strong for the sons of the chief, their mother came to the rescue, crying, 'Out with the fellow; it is not a good errand that has brought him here.' So saying, she struck Alexander Gunn a severe blow on the forehead with a huge 'ladle,' such as was used in Caithness a number of years ago. Young Gunn fled wounded from the house, and ran to the top of a hill in sight of the house of Kilcarnan, and there sat down, where he died from exhaustion and loss of blood. On his friends in Cattaig learning the fate of their clansman, they determined to be revenged. Two years after when the lads—the chief's sons—were grown a bit, they came to Caithness to visit their step-father. As they came down by Strathbeg, in the parish of Halkirk, the Cattaig Gunns were informed of it. Accordingly, a woman was sent up to the top of a house to give the alarm on their coming; and some of the Gunns, with George as one of the ringleaders, lay in ambush. When the chieftain's sons came to Tachar, which was then well wooded, although now not a stick remains, they heard a cry, 'The lambs are with the ewes, and the ewes are with the sheep.' 'That is a voice of warning,' said one of the brothers. They soon saw this was the case, for the Gunns immediately rose from their ambush, and in the fight which ensued the two brothers were killed. They were buried where the fight took place, and their graves may be seen at the present day. George Gunn, it is said, fled to Berriedale, but what became of him is hidden among the things of the past."

George, son of Alexander, married a sister of Sutherland of Langwell, the laird before Sir John Sinclair. He died about 1750 or 1760, by a fall from a cliff in trying to rescue a lamb. An Angus Gunn, son of William of Kinbrace, related to the chief, married the daughter of Alexander Bain, Backlass, whose gravestone in Dirlet says he died at Knockglass in 17—.



Alex. married a sister of Wm. Campbell of Ousdale. Their son William had a slight quarrel with Rob Donn, the Gaelic poet, which fact helps towards date. Angus's grand-daughter was alive, aged about 85, some ten years ago, and may be still. John Gunn, a descendant of George, born 1747, fled out of Dalemore to Helmsdale from the press-gang, taking refuge in the house of Captain Gray, related to Sutherland of Langwell. But he had to enlist, and became Gray's personal attendant. He lived at Auchnacraig, Berriedale, till his death by a fall from a cliff at the age of 84. His son John, Badbea, was in the militia of 1814, and died in 1875 at Berriedale. A grand-son, John, was a pioneer missionary in Livingstonia, Africa; and a handsome monumental stone in the Berriedale churchyard where these ancestors lie, keeps fresh his memory. Big Marcus's son James had many descendants who were widely scattered. His son James is buried in Clyth. In Dirlot churchyard there is a stone to Alexander, the son of George, about whom "Octogenarian" has given facts already mentioned. He is famous for lifting on his shoulder and carrying a large stone at the head of Loch More, Halkirk. He died of fever in 1786, aged 28, says Dr. Wm:

At this point some very remarkable original documents, favoured by John Gunn, naturalist, may appear. A set of excerpts from receipts, &c., of dates 1619 to 1653, with reference to the family of John Gunn (Robson), is particularly interesting as referring to persons connected with the Sandside corn-burning of 1615. The first is a discharge by Lord Forbes

to Sir Robert Gordon as executor for the "late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, who became cautioner for Donald Gilbertson, some time in Achalipster, for 100 merks, and 20 pounds Scots of expenses," the date 26th August, 1619. The second reads, "I, John Robson, son of the deceased John Robson, grant that I have received from the hands of William Innes, chamberlain to the Earl of Sutherland, the sum of 80 merks as annualrent, etc.," the date 15th October, 1620. It would be useful to be assured whether this Innes was Sandside; for, if so, his bailie-ship to the Earl of Sutherland is a new fact in his biography. The third excerpt is, "I, Alexander Gunn, *alias* Georgeson, in Altbraggach, for myself and Christian Gunn, my spouse, eldest lawful daughter of the late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, in Dunrobin, grant that I have received from the right honourable and worshipful Sir Robert Gordon, knight-baronet, and Alexander Gunn, *alias* Jameson, 8 head of old 'kye,' 7 young 'kye,' 4 great mares and two followers, left to the said Christian Gunn by the said late John Gunn, her father, etc.," with date 21st November, 1623. Fourth, "I, William Gunn, *alias* Robson, servitor to Sir Robert Gordon of that ilk" [or place, Gordon], "knight-baronet, son lawful of the late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, by these presents, grant that I have received 25 merks, lawful half of the annualrent of 50 merks, etc.," 13th January, 1626. Fifth, a disposition:—"Margaret Gunn, lawful daughter of the late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, in Dunrobin, and sister lawful to the late Alexander Gunn, who was youngest lawful son to the said late John Gunn, *alias*

Robson, for myself and my own right, title, and interest, and also having right by disposition made to me by John Gunn, junior, William, and Donald Gunn, my other three lawful brothers, of their executry and portions of the said late Alexander Gunn our younger brother's goods and gear, falling and being his and belonging to him, by the death of the said late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, our father, etc.," dated 17th May 1629. Sixth, a discharge of life-rent duties by "Margaret Sinclair, relict of the late John Gunn, *alias* Robson, with express advice, consent, and assent of John, the son of Rory, the son of John, the son of William, in Invernaver, her spouse that now is, etc.," with date of 17th May 1629. The second husband is no doubt also a Gunn. Seventh, "I, Donald Gunn in Dalmore, in complete payment of all and whatsoever money was left to me by my late father John Gunn, *alias* Robson, in his legacy and latter will." This is a receipt for 300 merks to Sir Robert Gordon, the tutor of Sutherland and historian, dated 29th May, 1629. Eighth, "Donald Gunn, Dirlet, 100 pounds Scots in name and behalf of my brother Colonel William Gunn." This is also a receipt to Gordon, with date of 30th November, 1637. Ninth, "I, John Gunn in Easterdale, brother-german to Sir William Gunn, knight and colonel, £100 Scots at Whitsunday and Martinmas," a receipt to Sir Robert Gordon, dated 1649-1650. Tenth, "Donald Gunn in Westerdale £200 Scots," receipt to the same, 4th May 1653. Eleventh, a discharge anent the "account between Colonel Sir William Gunn and Sir Robert Gordon: *Imprimis*, given to Colonel

Gunn's brothers this year of 1652 the sum of 300 merks ; *item*, given this year to Donald Gunn ten bolls victual at 13 merks the boll, 130 merks ; *item*, given to Donald Gunn at Gordons-ton, 19th October, 1652, the sum of 8 merks, 4 shillings, and 4 pence ; *item*, paid yearly to his mother for him for his part of 600 merks, 26 merks ; *item*, given by the said Sir Robert to the said Donald Gunn the year of God 1645, to maintain the said Donald's son at school according to the said Colonel Gunn's directions, ten bolls victual at 9 merks the boll, 90 merks ; *item*, paid by the said Sir Robert for passing the said Sir William Gunn's pedigree and branches through the seals, and to the clerk of the privy council, and for writing the same according to the custom, the year 1647, conform to the said Sir William's warrant to that effect, 520 merks ; *item*, given by the said Sir Robert to the said Donald Gunn, and to his said mother, and to her husband, at several and divers times when they came to me in Sutherland, at Dornoch and Dunrobin, and also in Moray, these many years bye-past, 25 dollars, 150 merks ; *item*, given to Major-General Gunn's brothers John and Donald, the year 1652, the sum of 300 merks ; *item*, given to Donald Gunn, the year 1652, for maintaining his son at school, 10 bolls victual at 10 merks the boll, 100 merks."

To these instructive extracts may be added a letter addressed, "For the right worshipful Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonston," dated Killernan, 26th June, 1659 :—"Right worshipful Sir, Seeing it has pleased God to have called Donald Gunn, brother to Sir William Gunn, out of this life, with whom your worship

had to do anent the monies you are due to Sir William Gunn, therefore, Sir, we the undersigned who are intrusted by the late Donald Gunn for assisting his eldest son, the bearer hereof, whom the said late Donald Gunn assigned to his whole right of the monies and to the whole powers and orders he had from his brother Sir William Gunn, do hereby desire your worship to pay the last year's annualrent, which should have been paid at Martinmas 1658, to the bearer, and to take his receipt thereupon, which is as valid as his father's was formerly. By this David Denune may have his portion thereof for transporting him back to his master Sir William Gunn, whom we intend to send at his return. Therefore let your worship write your letters to Sir William Gunn, for we see no clear way that your worship is willing to secure them for the money according to Sir William's order, till you have your own bond or a discharge of warrandice; for My Lord Sutherland has written that he has sent the whole interest to your worship. Therefore we hope your worship will make no scruple in paying it to the bearer. We are loth to trouble your worship further, and shall continue your worship's humble servants. (Signed) DAVID DENUNE. (Signed) JOHN GUNN. (Signed) A. GUNN." This Alexander is a Jameson, John being Robson. Annualrent is interest.

In the second edition of Calder's "History of Caithness" a remarkable letter by Lord Forbes referring to John Gunn, *alias* Robson, in connection with the Sandside corn-burnings, has been given on pages 328 and 329, dated "Driminor, 13th April, 1618." There is an existing MS. of a deed of release by Lord

Forbes in favour of Alexander Gunn, *alias* Robson, of date 1619, but unsigned. For both, see appendix within.

These what French historians call "justificative pieces" have been noted by their favourer. He supposes Alexander Gunn, *alias* Georgeson, to be George Gunn's son, and John Gunn, *alias* Robson's first cousin. His wife would therefore be his second cousin, and he was father of Colonel George Gunn, ancestor of the family of Rattoo, Kerry, Ireland. They trace themselves to a Caithnessman who entered the English service in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and becoming colonel had a grant of the lands of Rattoo. His grandson George founded the Irish family of Ballybunnion. Burke, Walford, and the rest of the genealogists have the usual numerous details about these Gunns. The colonel seems to have seen continental service in Lord Reay's regiment from Sir Robert Gordon's account. In his "Expedition," Munro mentions an Ensign Denune who may be the same that in 1659 mentions Sir William Gunn as his master. The Alexander Gunn, *alias* Jameson, of 21st November, 1623, and the A. Gunn of 26th June 1659, are the same, the chief of the clan; this M'Hamish being eldest son of John Gunn, *alias* Jameson, who was great-great-grandson of the coroner. Alexander's wife was a daughter of Lord Reay (see "House and Clan of Mackay"). From Alexander's younger brother George descended Hector and George Gunn, Rhives, the latter of whom claimed the chieftainship, to "please the laird," when it was well known to many that there existed direct posterity from Angus, eldest son of George, son

of George, Alexander's brother. It was admitted that the Rhives family had descended from John, the youngest brother of Angus. Another brother came between Angus and John, namely, George, father of the famous Big Alexander. George, the brother of Alexander Gunn, *alias* Jameson, was tacksman of Boroble, and had a son John, whose only son John was captain in the 12th Foot, and died at Rumsdale without issue. The marriage settlement deed executed by Alexander Gunn, *alias* Jameson, is said to exist still. In the letter to Sir Robert Gordon of 26th June, 1659, John is eldest son of Donald. Genealogical charts do not mention Donald as son of John Gunn, *alias* Robson, Robert being the name, who has a son John. As there is no Robert in the accounts of the trustees, Robert is an error. If this is so, John, the son of Donald, was of Crosskirk, Reay. See "Origines Parochiales," p. 745, where there is a reference to Robert John Robson, the lawful son of Anne Allisterson or Alexanderson in 1624, which may have caused the confusion. Easterdale is now Dale, being known as the former till at least 1799 (see notes to Torfæus). It is "Deal" in Henderson's "View" in 1812, and in Busby's "Minutes" it is "Dale." Donald Gunn in Dalmore lived with or was probably a subtenant of Patrick Gunn, Cattag, who then in 1629 held Dalmore. It is "curious to note how in that time of almost unquestioned fixity of tenure, when men had little cause or will to move about, Donald shifted his places of abode. In Westgarty when a boy, he is in Dalmore in 1629, in Dirlot his father's old farm in 1637, and in Westerdale in 1653." The prevalence of

putting to the horn explains the note-maker's difficulty, if there is one. As to fixity of tenure, such an idea or right was not known to underholders then, who were entirely at the mercy of the superiors, as Argyll's book, "*Scotland as it Is and as it Was*," proves well enough. But the note-maker's theory as follows may be founded on facts:—"He may have been a spendthrift, as he had the last of his share of his father's money in 1629, while he received 100 Scots from his brother Colonel William in 1637, £200 Scots presumably from the same source in 1653, and 8 merks, four shillings, and 4 pence the year before, as marked in Sir Robert Gordon's account of disbursements. He shared 150 merks with his mother before 1653, and with his brother John had 300 merks in 1653. When money was to be had Donald was at hand. But this may be judging him harshly. From the Killernan letter he may have looked after Sir William's affairs. Sir Robert Gordon was the knight's banker, and Donald was perhaps the divider of the money among his kin. It cannot be said that Sir William neglected his relatives." To explain the excerpts, etc., a pedigree is given from George the coroner, beginning with his seven sons, James, Robert, John, Alexander, William, Torquil, and Henry. James's descendants were, in eldest son order, William of Cattaig, Alexander, Big William, John, and the Alexander of the documents. Cattaig had a brother Alexander, Big William a brother Little William, and Alexander of the documents one named George. This was the line of chiefs. The coroner's son Robert had Donald, the ancestor of the Braemore family, and a second son, John,



the ancestor of Major-General Sir William. His third son, Alexander, was ancestor of Colonel George of Ireland. From the coroner's third son, John, came the line of William, Peter, Marcus, Alexander, and the Patrick mentioned. To close these useful notes, there is in existence a fragment of MS. referring to the case of George Gunn, Corrish, tried for forgery in 1736; and there is also a genealogical tree of the clan, drawn up in 1879, which ought to be of real value to investigators.

Some knowledge of the tree can be given. It centres around George the coroner of 1478. His ancestors were Sir James Gunn of Ulbster, Sir Donald of the same, Ingram, James de Gunn, his father of unknown name, Snaekol 1250, Gunn the first of the name, Olaf of Gairsay burnt at Duncansbay, Rolf or Rollo descended from the prince of Moeria in Norway. Olaf had another son, Sweyn the viking, killed at Dublin, who had two sons Olaf and Andrew, ancestors of the Swansons. Of the coroner's sons, the eldest, James of Kildonan's line ran thus:—William of Cattaig 1517, Alexander 1570, Big William 1601, John of Navidale, Alexander of Navidale, Donald of Killernan, Captain Alexander of Badenloch 1764, and Colonel William of the Dutch service who died in 1782. Alexander of 1570 had Little William by a second marriage. Little William's eldest son was Donald, "the scholar," from whom two lines, the elder line, Adam in Milbuie, William, Adam (with brothers John and Alexander), Adam, William (with brother Alexander in Dunbeath, father of Alexander, Dornoch), Adam, Rev. Robert (with brother Rev. Thomas), William (with brother Rev. Thomas,

having a son Robert) and Gordon ; younger line, William second son, Donald, William, Robert, William, Robert, David (with brothers John, Alexander in Thurso with sons Robert in London and Alexander, William in Durness with son William, and Robert), David. Little William's second son William had sons John and Donald, from the former of whom William, and Gunns in Oslay, with names unknown. The late Donald Gunn, farmer, Braehour, was married to a Gunn of Oslay, Latheron, their daughter dying on 19th February, 1888, at Newton, Watten, and interred in Dirlot churchyard. A John Gunn came to Ashstinlet, Shurery, in 1799 ; and as tenant on the Sandside estate, paid £5 for the crop of that year and £5 for the shealings, Mrs Henderson, Clyth, by her own hands, paying £3 3s. of his rent of £10 8s., on 29th January, 1799. Next year on 10th September a fine of 10s. 6d. was laid upon him for permitting a millstone to be taken away by Mr Colly, factor at Calder, contrary to the terms of his tack. It would be interesting to know the place of this tacksman in Gunn pedigree, his Clyth connection hinting that he was of Wick parish. John of Navidale by his second son George had cadet branches, the first, Donald, John, Donald, John, Robert in Autohr, John (with brothers John and William by a second marriage, William father of George in Swiney), and Donald in Balligil, with brothers George, Robert, and William. Robert in Autohr's second son William by first marriage had a son Robert in Balligil. The second cadet branch from John of Navidale was John (with brother Alexander, father of George,

whose son was Big Alexander, and also father of John, whose sons were William in Braehour and Donald the sennachy, Brawlbin, the latter father of Captain Alexander Gunn, once in Braehour, now in Watten, who has a son Peter in Australia), George, Hector, George in Rhives, who had a brother Donald and son Hector. Alexander of Navidale had a cadet line beginning with his second son George of Killernan, then William, Alexander, and William in Reay; George's other son Alexander having George (with brothers William and Robert), father of the Rev. Alex., Bloomingdale, New York, who has four sons, Alexander, George, Lewis, John, the first of whom has Charles, New York. Donald of Killernan had a third son Colonel William, and a cadet branch by his second son George of Corrish, who had sons, George (who had William, Alexander, and James) and Alexander of Corrish, the eldest, who had William, Robert, Donald, the first being father of Alexander, Reay, who had William in Westfield, Alexander, David, Daniel, and Finlay. Captain Alex. of Badenloch had two sons, Lieut. James of the 71st Regiment, who fell in battle in the East Indies 1730, and Lieutenant Morrison Gunn, who died at Gibraltar the same year. This exhausts the descendants of the coroner's eldest son James.

Robert the second's line ran thus:—Donald of Braemore, David, Alexander 1624, John, George with no sons, Janet married to Rev. John Munro of Halkirk, John Gunn Munro of Braemore and Pointzfield, Col. Innes Munro, Sir George Gunn Munro 1788, a London merchant, who had two sons Charles

and Innes. Robert's second son John had by first marriage Alexander 1565, George (whose son was Alexander father of Colonel George), and John 1586, father of John of Dirlot 1618. Dirlot's sons were John of Kinbrace 1624 (father of Big William of Cattaig), Major-General Sir William, baron of the holy Roman empire, who settled in Ulm, and Robert in Lybster, Reay. Robert had John of Crosskirk, Reay, father of Big Donald 1710, whose son was Alexander, "the scholar of Murza," father of John in Hastigrew. John had Captain William, Bowertour; Captain James, Scouthal; and Rev. Alexander, Watten. The last had John, William, James, Robert M.D. (with son John) and Rev. Alexander Gunn, now in Watten, whose sons are James, John, and Alexander in Penang, Alexander having Joseph and Alexander.

The coroner's third son John of Cattag had his line thus—William, Peter, Marcus, Alexander-Marcus, Patrick, Big Marcus, all of Cattag. Big Marcus had John (with his brother James of Campster, forefather of the Gunns, Campster, whose names are unknown). John's sons were Murdoch of Cattag, William, Achliepster; and Marcus, Dalmore. Murdoch's sons were Alexander of Cattag, John, and William. Alexander had Donald, Dundee, whose son was John. Marcus, Dalmore's sons were Captain John Sinclair Gunn in Dale and Lieutenant William of the 41st Regt., Spittal. Capt. John's sons were Alexander, Dale (with six sons, William, Marcus, James, Alexander, Donald, John); Marcus, Culgower (with two sons John, Glendhu, and Robert, M.D.); James, Sibster (with two

sons, William and John Sinclair); John, Ratter; and William, Glendhu.

The coroner's fourth son Alexander, mentioned 1456, had no issue.

His fifth son William was ancestor of the Williamsons and Wilsons.

The sixth son, Torquil Gunn, was mortally wounded in 1478.

Henry, the youngest, sometimes called the sixth, besides being the forefather of the Hendersons, had a cadet line, William, Donald, Angus, Angus, John, Alexander.

Snekol, 1250, the son of Gunn, married Regnilde, granddaughter of Earl Roland killed at Calder in 1158. His grandfather was Erland 1064, whose father was Sigurd 990 and 1014, whose father was Lodvar 980, earl of Orkney and Caithness. Torfinn I. was Lodvar's father and Torf Einar 940, Torfinn's. Torf Einar was the son of Prince Rognvald of Moeria, Norway, descended from Ivar, jarl of Upland, son of Halfdun, who had three brothers, Suadi, Heiti, and Gorenor. But of the antecessors of Snekol, one of the slayers of Earl John of Caithness in Thurso, there is better and fuller knowledge than this, which will no doubt appear by and bye in an elaborate history of the Gunns.

Of the genealogical tree the use may be considerable, even though its dry catalogue of names, often without date or any distinction or renown whatsoever, suggests great shakiness as to accuracy. Documentary evidence, the only really sure footing for pedigree-making, is extremely scarce with the Gunns, and a

courageous attempt like the above to create a consistent genealogy deserves more than respect. It is something to give an outline, which may need corrections to indefinite extent. The truth is often found by the counsel of many, and a Gunn genealogical tree may be made out by combined knowledge and long collaboration of details. What is most of all desirable is that the names should be attached to definite times, and to events of some memoric importance. It matters little to string people together in relationship, if they have no intrinsic value for their fellows through sayings or deeds of some notable kind. There must be much that is remarkable in Gunn history, and it will be pleasant to attach renown to names which, as above, are simply names and nothing more.

It is turned now to less legendary matter. In St Mary's Chapel, Lybster, Reay, in the inner of the two divisions, there are instructive monumental tablets to the Gunns, Crosskirk, the inscriptions of which are printed for preservation in the appendix. William Mackay of Bighouse's daughter was married to Gunn of Braemore; her brother, Angus of Bighouse, being married to Jane, daughter of Patrick Sinclair of Ulbster, about 1668. The memorial tablet of Angus and his wife still exists in a portion of the old church of Reay within the ancient churchyard, the fourth part of the aisle belonging to Bighouse. George Gunn in Knockfinn was one of the Sutherland raiders of 1665 and 1666, who took cattle and horses from Spittal, Forss, Catchary, and other places. John Mackay of Kirtomy, whose wife was Elizabeth, daughter of James Sinclair of

Lybster, had a daughter Margaret married to the "chief of the Gunns." Lieutenant-General Mackay, H.E.I.C.S., Ledcop House, Kent, was her nephew. There is a sasine dated 7th August, 1676, to the Hon. Col. Angus Mackay of Melness and Kathrine Gunn, his wife. In the rebellion of 1745 the *Gentleman's Magazine* notes that Prince Charlie had, joined to the Farquharsons, "a few of the clan of Gunns;" but on the Government side the Earl of Loudon had, among his 1840 men, "120 Gunns under their chief MacKemish." There is record of William Gunn, London, "once tailor in Thurso," heiring his uncle Dopald Gunn, writer, Edinburgh, 1734. In the Wick burgh records, part of which have been published in the *Northern Ensign*, there are many absolutely trustworthy references to various local Gunns, which could be consulted directly by those interested. The "Services of Heirs" states that William "Gun" of Kinbrace, Sutherland, was served heir-general to his father Adam Gunn of Kinbrace on 7th July, 1709. Alexander Gunn of Wester Helmsdale was served heir to his father Donald Gunn in Badenloch in 1723. On 26th March, 1705, Sir James Sinclair of Dunbeath and Stemster, Baronet (created 12th October, 1704), M.P., writes to Sir George Sinclair of Clyth, M.P., mentioning his brother David, and his not having consented to David's marrying Braemore's daughter. See Calder's "History," page 290, as to Sir James. In 1725, Geo. Gunn of Braemore, Caithness, was made heir-special of wadset of Braemore, 6000 merks, to his father John Gunn of Braemore, who died in 1706. "George Munro

(Gunn) of Braemore, to his father, John Gunn of Braemore, who died in 1773, heir-special in Braemore, and in Geise Meikle, including mains of Geise and Whitefield, and in Lybster, 1775," is a mixed piece of information from the "Services of Heirs." On 13th March, 1795, Angus Gunn, overseer at Geise, was married to Catherine Davidson in Buckies, with witnesses John Davidson, joiner in Thurso, and George Sinclair, farmer in Geise, this George being an illegitimate of Alexander, earl of Caithness, who died in 1765. John Gunn who died at Wick on 12th October, 1872, aged 70, was married to Elizabeth sister of Captain Johnstone of the ship "Tory," who stood his criminal trial on 5th October, 1846. In 1829 Robert Gunn was appointed minister of Keiss. A John Gunn was second lieutenant in the Royal Marines in 1806. Andrew Denune in Stangergill, Caithness (perhaps related to him of the Gunn Robson excerpts), was made commissioner on the committee of war in 1649. In Clyth churchyard John Gunn, Camster, is commemorated, born 1727 and died 1791. The following is the passage, referred to previously, in the *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*:—In 1624, William Sutherland, the lawful son of Christina Allisterson or Alexanderson, was served heir portioner to his grandfather William [Gunn, *alias*] Allisterson or Alexanderson in the lands of Lybster [Reay], commonly called the fourpenny land and halfpenny land of Lybster, extending to the half of the lands of Lybster, with half the mill, and also in the lands of Borrowston, commonly called the fourpenny land and halfpenny land of



Borrowston, with the fishing on the sea and on the land, formerly in the sheriffdom of Inverness, then in the sheriffdom of Caithness. In the same year Robert John [Gunn, *alias*] Robson, the lawful son of Ann Allisterson or Alexanderson was served heir portioner to his grandfather William [Gunn, *alias*] Allisterson or Alexanderson in the same lands." This is taken from the retours or returns of heirs.

Some interesting discussion as to who Margaret Sinclair was, the wife of John Gunn, *alias* Robson, and in 1629 wife of John Gunn, Invernaver, may be noticed. It was suggested that she was a daughter of William Sinclair of Dunbeath, Reay, and Downreay. Then Richard Sinclair of Achlibster, according to Henderson's "Caithness Family History," was her whole or half brother. Lord Forbes had Achlibster before 1619, the year of the death of John Gunn, *alias* Robson. There is a receipt dated 26th August, 1619, acknowledging payment to Lord Forbes by Sir Robert Gordon, one of Gunn's executors, of 100 merks and £20 Scots of expenses, as the deceased had become cautioner for Donald Gilbertson, no doubt a Gunn, some time in Achlibster. With reference to the Gordon executor, it is worth noting that his descendant Sir Robert Gordon was served heir-special on 9th Feby. and 6th March, 1714, to his father Sir Robert, who died 1704, in 15,000 merks over Latheron, Knockinnan, Wick, etc., in Caithness. The executor was the well-known historian, and busy as he was with Caithness, it is not improbable that he gained this right over Latheron and the rest. But this is perhaps apart from

narrative of the Gunns. The probabilities do not favour Margaret being one of the Downreay-Dunbeath family, who were then the richest landholders of the two counties, while the Gunns were already falling into that position of "broken men" which has all but obliterated them from state records, and which makes their lineage story so bare and almost impossible to connect, not to say illustrate. In recent times the native ability has again had fairplay, and the record of the race, especially as soldiers, has been noteworthy.

Two or three references to Caithness members of the clan must close this fragment. Captain John Sinclair Gunn, Dale, born 1770, married 1800, and who died at the Free Church Manse of Westerdale in 1856, was the patriarch of contemporary Gunn relatives. In Captain Henderson's "View" of Caithness, Mr Sinclair Gunn, Dale, is given as an agricultural authority of 1807, especially by a description of his improvement of 30 acres of land at from £10 to £16 the acre. His wife was Anne Davidson, of the Buckies, and Swanson of Gerston, connections, all of them of the same blood. To the ministers, doctors, and merchants of the county, Captain Gunn's family of nine had unusually numerous relationships; but perhaps his daughter Elizabeth, born 1803, and married to William Miller, merchant, Thurso, about 1833, held the important position, as mother to John Miller, proprietor of Scrabster; to Principal William Miller, M.A., C.S.I., Madras; and Rev. Alexander Miller, Buckie. Of the Davidsons, as a branch of the Gunns, a supplementary account may be given

hereafter, considerable materials existing for the purpose. Some of the relationships by marriage of the Dale Gunns are the Munroes of Achany ; the Rosses of Gledfield ; Dr. Rainy and his son, Principal Rainy of the Free Church ; the Rev. R. G. Balfour of Edinburgh ; Alexander Taylor Innes, advocate and author ; Rev. John Macdonald, the "Apostle of the North," born in Reay ; Rev. George Davidson of Latheron, with his son-in-law, the Rev. J. D. Macculloch ; the late Dr. Mill, Thurso, and Mrs Mill, to whom Hugh Miller refers in "Testimony of the Rocks ;" David Sinclair, farmer and merchant, Thurso ; the Swansons of Gerston, represented by John Henry Davidson ; Sheriff-Clerk Maclachlan of Wick ; the late Rev. Charles Thomson, Wick ; Wm. Mitchell, Ribigil ; Rev. Colin Mackenzie, Strathglass ; Dr. Renton, Glasgow ; G. Lewis, S.S.C., Edinburgh ; Hay, some time in Scrabster ; and various reverend Macphails. It is of local interest to note that William Campbell, Ousdale, born 20th Nov., 1710, was married first to Miss Gunn, Latheron, and secondly to Miss H. Sinclair. He was grandfather to Sir William Campbell of Canada. His son, William, born in 1743, married Miss Gunn, Dalmore. The marriage of the heiress of Braemore, Miss Gunn, George Gunn's only child, to the Rev. John Munro, Halkirk, of the Foulis family, who was inducted in 1706 and died 1743, has already been noted. Munro's brother, William, married Mary, daughter of Sir George Sinclair, presumably of Clyth, M.P., who died in 1706. Elizabeth Gunn, sister of the Rev. Alexander, married the late Dr. Eric Sinclair, Wick. But on

all these points of contemporary lineage there are very full materials in the hands of many county genealogists ; and they do not come within the present scope, except incidentally, the object being to give the general historic impression of a pre-eminently Teutonic and characteristically Caithness race.

The coats of arms of the Gunns need recording, and first those of the Irish families. To the Gunn of Fethard, county Tipperary, a coat of arms was granted in 1768, the representative being then William, descended from an ancient family in Munster. It is, Gules, on a chev. or, three mullets azure, on a chief of the second, two flint muskets full cock in saltire, ppr., a bordure ermine ; with crest, two swords in saltire, points upwards, ppr., pommels and hilts or ; and motto, *Dum spiro spero*—"While I live I hope." The Gunns of Rattoo, Kerry, Ireland, have, Argent, three cannon barrels fesswise, ppr. ; crest, a dexter hand couped at the wrist erect, ppr. ; and motto, *Vincit amor patriae*, "Love of country conquers." The Gunns of Sutherland had, Argent, a galley of three masts, her sails furled and oars in action, sable, flags gules, within a bordure azure on a chief of the third, a bear's head of the first, muzzled of the second, betwixt two mullets of the field ; crest, a dexter hand wielding a sword proper ; and motto, *Aut pax aut bellum*, "Either peace or war." The Gunns of Caithness had, Argent, a ship under sail in a sea in base, all ppr., on a chief gules, three mullets of the field. It is clear that the Gunns of Caithness and Sutherland kept up thus the memory of their descent from the viking earls of Orkney, upon whose history the sagas and

Torfaeus are the authorities. Swansons of the same kin do not seem to have been so tenacious of the past, for their coats of arms are scarce, the following being by no means of much meaning so far as yet appears, Argent, three laurel branches, vert ; with crest, two branches of laurel in saltire, proper. The explanation is probably to be found in the fact that if the Gunns had little property in land secured by charter, their cousins the Swansons had still less, and therefore have not much record in heraldry stores, which are often extremely useful for historic enlightenment. It is possible that further research may find additional coats of arms of the children of Olaf, the prefect of Duncansbay for Paul, earl of Orkney, his kinsman.

## APPENDIX.

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### A MANUSCRIPT HISTORY.

By the favour of Mrs. Janet Leslie Gunn, Langley Lodge, Wick, relict of Rev. Robert Innes Gunn, Free Church of Scotland, Keiss, a manuscript is available, entitled "History of the Clau Gunn, From the earliest period to the present date, Compiled from the most authentic sources, By Æneas Gunn, writer, Edinburgh." It is dated Edinburgh, April, 1852, nine years before the publication of the first edition of Calder's "History of Caithness;" but the major portion seems to have been composed about 1868, judging from internal references and the external appearance of different parts of the MS. This Edinburgh solicitor was a son of Æneas Gunn, Tacher Farm, the son of William in Ascaig, Kildonan. In Wick churchyard there is a tombstone erected by John Gunn, Jamaica, to his mother, Catherine Innes, wife of Æneas Gunn, Tacher. She died 7th August, 1831, aged 59. Her son George, a doctor of medicine, died in Jamaica on 1st February, 1826, at the age of 25. Another of these brothers was William of the Inland Revenue. A family tree of the Gunns, by the late Æneas, junior, this historian, was prepared in 1870, as an improvement on another he made in 1868, both of which have useful items. But it is the history which is the best proof of his enthusiasm and industry. Some digest of it, and a free quotation of the passages original to himself which have notable value, will form an effective addition to the lore of the subject.

The MS. is a bound quarto of 322 pages, carefully written for press on one side of the paper, and would make an octavo volume of 150 printed pages. An introductory chapter, 28 pages in the MS., outlining the history of Caithness and Sutherland down to about the twelfth century, "gathered chiefly and abridged from the Norse sagas," is of general historic interest, but has hardly any relation to the Gunns. His next chapter, on "the origin of the clan," is more to the point. Mentioning Sir Robert Gordon's reference of them to Denmark as their first country, for which see page 38 within, he quotes from the *Miscellanea Scotica* thus:—"It is recorded that three brothers called Guin, Leod, and Leandris came out of Denmark to the north parts of Scotland to follow their fortune, and that Guin took possession of the braces of Caithness, where his posterity remain to this day called the clan Gunn; that Leod conquered Lewis, from whom are descended the Macleods; and that Leandris conquered Bracchat, namely, Lairg, Creich, Slishehillish, together with the lands of Strathcharron, Strathoykell, Serivater, and Glenbeg. To Leandris succeeded his son Tyre, and to Tyre, Paul Macintyre, whose daughter and heiress Catherine was married to Walter, named Cluggmach, laird of Balnagown. From Leandris are descended the clan Leandris, now named Ross. Paul Macintyre was a valiant man, and caused Caithness to pay him blackmail. It is reported that he had 180 cows yearly on this footing out of the diocese. He had a son Murdo Reoch, a stout and hardy captain, who while he was taking up the custom cows was killed by the men of Caithness at Spittal Hill. Murdo's sons then retreating were drowned at Helmsdale." A manuscript in the possession of Macleod of Macleod is referred to, which gives the descent of these three clans from the Norwegian Olave, fifth king of the island of Man, the source of Taylor's narration, as on pages 11 and 12 within. But the "Chronicle of the Isle of Man" gives no countenance to this theory. Further, a sixteenth century history of the Macleods makes them stock with the Campbells. The origin for the Rosses or Gillanders, "servants of St. Andrew," is likewise discredited, a Gillanders

being one of the besiegers of Malcolm IV. at Perth in 1160, King Olave dying as late as 1237, and the death of Farquhar, earl of Ross, occurring at Tain in 1251.

But it is unnecessary to follow the somewhat shadowy discussion ; and that Torfæus in his *Oreades* gives the right version, can be easily granted to the author of the MS. "About the year 1136 there lived in the island of Gairsay in Orkney a man of high rank named Olaf, who was held in the greatest esteem by Earl Paul. His wife was Asleif, a lady of noble extraction and much talent. Their children were Waltheof, Gunn, and Swen, with one daughter, Ingegerdi, who all had a liberal education in the branches then in repute." Olaf, whose father's name was Hrolf, left Gairsay to be prefect or chamberlain of Duncansbay for Earl Paul. Some days before Christmas, Waltheof, on his way from his island of Stronsay to the earl's yule feast at the palace of Orphir, was drowned ; and, on the night of the festival, his father's house in Caithness was burnt to the ground, its owner perishing in the flames. How it was Aulver Rosta, grandson of the lady of Kinbrace, Frankurk, who, instigated by her, surrounded with his men Olaf's home, and ultimately set it on fire, is told by Calder and others from Torfæus. Swen was away on a fishing expedition, and Gunn, with his mother, was celebrating yule in a friendly Caithness neighbouring castle, when Olaf was destroyed.

The MS. takes up the narrative of Swen's revenge, as told in the Latiu work of the learned Dane, and follows through the events of his life for 52 written pages, a few local descriptions being added. But, however interesting, this does not properly belong to a history of the Gunns ; Swen or Sweyn, the most typical of all the gallant vikings, being the ancestor of the Swansons, for whom his picturesque and courageous life ought in fairness to be reserved. The hero of Lambaburgum or Bucholly Castle, Freswick, is an ancestor of whom any stock might be proud, and his annexation by the Gunns cannot be approved of by his descendants. No family have a better first chapter of their history than the Swansons. Rev.



Alexander Gunn, Watten, it is said, can show that Swen and not Gunn was the founder of the clan; but the production of his authorities, as to this paradoxical position, must be waited for till the publication of his work.

About 1196 comes some knowledge of Gunn, in the statement that then his relict Ingered, the sister of Earl Harold the Younger, married Lifolf, one of his captains. This leads to full but rather irrelevant description of the decisive battle of Claredon, Thurso, between the two Earl Harolds; Gunn's brother-in-law being slain at the tower which preserves his name, his captain Murt's death commemorated in the word Murkle, anciently spelt Murthill or Morthill, "Hill of the Dead." King William of Scotland invited Reginald, Lord of the Isles, to recover the north from Harold the Elder or the Wicked. They met on the heights of Strathnaver at Achness. "The field of battle is called Dal Harrold or Harold's Field, a plain dotted with cairns or heaps of stones, some large, denoting where persons of rank or eminence were buried." It is added that they also fought at Achkillnaborgie, and on a spot near Farr. "In the churchyard of Farr there is a fine stone engraved with runic devices. It is about five feet above ground, of a hard flinty composition not native to the district, and it is called 'The Monument of the Sons of Farquhar,' some Macleods claiming burial around it a century ago." Reginald established deputies over the reconquered north. But, it may be asked, what has this to do with the clan? The "*Orkneyinga Saga*" is, however, brought into service further with the account of Harold's return to Thurso, his cutting out the tongue and eyes of the bishop at Scrabster Palace, his punishing and fining of the inhabitants, and his reduction of the country a second time. King William himself now marched against the tyrant, who, with only 7,200, dreading the larger royal army, sued for peace at the king's encampment in Ousdale near Berriedale. It was granted on condition of his paying money and acknowledging vassalage. But the pope compelled severe penances upon Harold, who died in 1206, aged 73. The burning of Bishop

Adam at Halkirk on 12th September, 1222, is told in detail. "His residence was situated between the present manse and Quoycrook, the ruins of which were visible about a century ago, when the ground was ploughed up and every trace of them effaced. The church stood near Quoycrook, and was called St. Katharine's, a green spot full of stones pointing out the place where it stood." The MS. describes the castle of Brawl as on the opposite side of the river, Earl John residing there at the time, the Scottish records mentioning it as early as 1375. King Alexander the Second's personal presence in Caithness and severe punishment of the offending mob are narrated, and Pope Celestine's bull of approval of his action is commented on.

After 15 wandering but readable pages, the proper subject is again taken up thus, "About 1230 Snekkoll, the son of Gunn, abode with Hanef in Orkney, the king of Norway's collector; and it would seem that all Slagbrillar's children were then dead, Magnus and Harold having been also slain." Snekkoll, as a descendant of Earl Ronald, claimed right to half of Orkney and diocesan Caithness. He demanded from Earl John the restoration of his ancestors' possessions, who stubbornly refused to surrender them. It was for fear of his life that he left Caithness; but he returned to Thurso, accompanied by Hanef and a strong guard, to prosecute his claims. It was reported that Earl John was to attack them on a certain night, but they resolved to anticipate the blow by striking first. They attacked the earl's residence in Thurso successfully; and Earl John, having taken refuge in a cellar, as his last hope of safety, was stabbed to death, most of his retainers meeting the same cruel fate. Hanef returned to Orkney, where he had to defend himself against Earl John's supporters. The case was brought before Hacon, king of Norway; and Snekkoll Gunn, with several others, were imprisoned in the castle of Bergen, Norway, while some were executed. Snekkoll Gunn was ultimately released, but continued at King Hacon's court, insisting on his rights. "His majesty deprived him of his lands in Orkney, and the tradition is that he then settled in Caithness. It

is impossible to discover what lands Earl Ronald held, but the probability is that Snekkoll Gunn obtained possession of some of them."

The MS., somewhat abruptly, next describes Castle Gunn, at Bruan, and Castle Haberry, a mile distant, leaving the implication that these were the seats of Snekkoll Gunn. "On an isolated rock detached from the mainland, but between which the sea does not pass, stood Castle Gunn, at one time the residence of the chief of the clan." The rock is very steep to the north, landwards; and was accessible only on the south, from the sea. A fishing station lies in the hollow between the castle and the land, to which steps in the rock have been cut. This fastness was demolished by a king of Norway, whose daughter one of these Gunns had married at that court, though he had a wife at Castle Gunn. Soon after the second marriage he left Norway for Caithness, in order to make preparation for receiving his bride, leaving directions with the captain of the vessel in which she was coming to make for a point called Roeberry, at Ulbster, where he was to set up a lighted beacon. His purpose was to destroy the ship, which, arriving at night, was wrecked, and the princess perished. "The spot where the wreck happened is known as *Lech an Or* or the 'Golden Rock.' For ages after the catastrophe people believed that a great deal of gold and silver lay about the rock. Some pretended that in calm weather when the tide was out they could see these metals shining in the water." In punishment of this treachery, the king of Norway fitted out an expedition, demolished the castle, and slew Gunn with all his retainers. He also destroyed another building of the Gunns, since known as "the burnt castle," which was situated on the glebe land of Bruan. The stones preserved the marks of fire till recent times, but hardly a vestige of the ruin remains. To this the MS. adds that "the Runic stone in the graveyard at Ulbster was placed over the spot where the lady who perished by shipwreck was buried; and, in the burying-ground at East Clyth, a stone about six feet in height may be seen, where it is said a brother of the princess was interred, he having been drowned at the same time as his

sister. There is no inscription on the latter stone, but it is marked with the cross, which shows that it was set up in Christian times." All this has the air of historical fact rather than tradition, and future research, especially among Norse records, may make it the most striking and intelligible portion of earlier Gunn annals.

Of the second monolith nothing can be said yet beyond the above, as it holds the same position that it probably did on first erection; but the princess's pillar has been subjected to what, from the topographical and historical points of view, cannot but be called gratuitous indignity. In a letter dated Travellers' Club, Pall Mall, London, 6th March, 1890, Sir Tollemache Sinclair says, "The only stone which I removed from Ulbster, and which is now in front of Thurso Castle, is the well-known Pictish stone." This is the monolith of the princess, and if it is a fellow to that of East Clyth, it cannot be Runic or Pictish, but a Christian monumental memorial. Not having seen the Ulbster one, which is said to be "covered with sculpturings on both sides, and to belong to the class of stones in the north-east of Scotland of which Stuart has written with pictorial illustrations," it is impossible to discuss the subject further now. But the later history of the princess's stone is suggestive of rash interference with what may well be called a principal landmark of local event; and it is the manifest duty of the people of Caithness to demand its restoration, from the jejune position of being a visitors' wonder at a private house, to its proper historical site in Ulbster churchyard. Even if a special Act of Parliament were necessary, the monolith ought to be replaced. At some early period it had fallen, and was long out of sight in the graveyard, but about 1770 it was unearthed by Francis, the eldest son of James Sinclair, chamberlain and steward of the household at Ulbster House. Francis is the great-grandfather of James Sinclair, Wick, jeweller and meteorologist; and that family having been buried around the stone for fourteen known generations, it was natural that they have looked on its abstraction as of the nature of personal outrage to them. It is not necessary to speak of the confusion of

historical monumental evidence which such action always produces. This is not much digression, because it promises to elucidate Gunn history at a most important but hitherto obscure period.

The author of the MS. wanders again out of his proper field, but what he writes of the Cheynes is in itself useful. The ruins of Ronald's hunting-lodge, where the river Thurso leaves Loch More, were used about 150 years ago to build the bridge there. His lady secreted the unwelcome two daughters with a nurse who lived at a place on the east side of Dorrery Hill, near the foot, called The Corrie.

Here the MS. reaches the time when Sir Robert Gordon's "History" takes up the running; and henceforward, as usual, little that is original appears, that megatherion (not to mention his continuator, Gordon of Sallagh) striding the field like a Colossus of Rhodes. It is with no disrespect to the author of the MS. that it must be said that he, like almost everybody else who treats of the period till 1660, becomes the bound slave of these Gordons. But some items he has. The battle of Harpsdale in 1426 was fought at Achardle, and the Flight of Sandside in 1437 was pushed as far as Downreay. In the first struggle of the latter, which was at the small hill among the bent called Krockstangar, beside the sea, supposed to be itself the memorial mound of Stangar, a Norse hero, the overthrow was "with slaughter on either side," says Sir Robert. Many relics have been found there. That Gunns were among the fugitives, gives a reason for reference to the event, victorious for the Mackays. The conflict on Tannach Moor, or Blare-Tannie, in 1438, between the Gunns and the Keiths, aided by the Mackays, resulted in great slaughter, two Gunn or Caithness leaders killed. The author of the MS. failed in a personal search to identify the field of battle, but he gives the general information that it was on the Hill of Tannach, three or four miles south-west of Wick. Here again the Gunns lost the day.

Escaping for the moment from Sir Robert's historical clutches, the tale of the abduction of Helen Gunn is given as another cause of enmity.

between the Keiths and Gunns. "Situated on the margin of a clear little stream which issues from the north-west end of the Pap, one of the Braemore hills, stood the house of Helen Gunn's father. The spot occupied by the house is still pointed out. The principal or chief of the Keiths who headed the others of that name in Caithness, saw Helen Gunn as he was passing through Braemore, and he determined at all hazards to carry her away. She was on the eve of being married to a relative of her own named Gunn. The night of the marriage the Keiths came secretly to Braemore and entered the bridal home, taking the Gunns by surprise. Immediate fight ensued, with slaughter on both sides, but the Keiths effected their purpose. Helen was borne to Ackergill Tower, where she was imprisoned by her captor. Her spirit could not brook captivity, and she asked the keeper to allow her to see the country from the top of the tower. Conscious that she could not escape, and that if she remained with her captor her ruin was certain, she threw herself from the tower and perished on the spot. A tombstone existed in the neighbourhood bearing the name of Helen Gunn. It was last seen about 1770, but has now disappeared, having sunk in the sand or been destroyed."

Coroner Gunn's biography is told in the usual way, with some additions. "On a wild bold headland at East Clyth stood the castle of Haberry, occupied by the Gunns after the destruction of their castle at Bruan, and there dwelt George Gunn, the *Braistach Mohr*." As to the office, the ancient statutes of Scotland are consulted:—"The coroner holds inquest upon secret murders and slaughters. The inquisition must be in public streets or open places in the presence of the lieges. He is called coroner because the violent death of the subject belongs to the king's crown and power. If an open charge of breaking the peace were made before the coroner he could apprehend the accused, but the sheriff without a public accusation. He had also to look after the business of levying local soldiery." Of the famous tragical meeting at St. Aire Chapel, half way between Girnigo and Ackergill, there is a variation that 100 was the

number on each side of the Keiths and Gunns, the coroner followed by four sons; but deference is made in the end to the authority of Sir Robert Gordon as to the number being 12. He asserted in 1630 that the blood on the walls of the chapel could then be seen, though the treacherous encounter occurred in 1464. "A considerable part of the ruins of the chapel remained till about 80 years ago, when the walls were pulled down and rude gravestones raised to fill a neighbouring hollow for the purposes of the plough, the locality being now under regular crops. The size of the building was 30 feet by 16, and it was situated within a few yards of the sea-shore, on what is at present the farm of Shorelands." Many of the Keiths and all the Gunns were slain except the sons William and Henry. These "after the slaughter of their friends at St. Tears, William being severely wounded, came to the hill of Yarrows, distant six or seven miles, and rested at a spot called afterwards, from this circumstance, Toft Gunn." Here Henry proposed to recover their father's sword and coat of mail from the Keiths, who had retired to Dirlot Castle. It is noted that part of its ruins still exist, though it never could have been extensive, because of the small area of the rock on which it stood, over the river of Thurso. Henry looking in at a loophole with bent bow, the chief of the Keiths drinking mockingly from a *quaigh* or cup to the health of this very Henry Gunn, *Beg* or Little, and exposing his throat from the protection of his armour, the whizz of the deadly arrow, accompanied with the cry, "Gunn's compliments to the Keith," are the details of this sequel to the previous chapel scene of blood. Henry's followers rushed in and completed the surprise, regaining the coroner's weapons and armour. The brothers disputed about the possession of these, William as senior, and Henry as recapturing them; the latter thereafter founding the clan of Hendersons, hurt at William's successful assertion of the rights of seniority. Of William's descent are the Williamsons of Caithness.

"Coroner Gunn's eldest son James was absent at the time of his father's death, upon receiving accounts of which, he with his family and others of

his clan settled in Sutherland, and obtained the lands of Killernan from Adam Gordon, then earl of Sutherland. The glen of Kildonan, a wild and romantic spot about 30 miles in length, was principally peopled by the Gunns, and often termed in the Celtic language *Gleann na Guineach* or 'The Gunns' Valley.' The chief was called McHamish." So devoted were his followers that their common saying was *Toill Dhea's McHamish*, "Let the will of God and that of McHamish be done." The coroner's second son Robert settled in Braemore, and his branch were "the chiefs of the Gunns who dwelt in Caithness." John, the third son, and his descendants occupied Bregaul or Cattaig until of late.

A Donald Gunn called McRob, supposed to be a grandson of the coroner, and who lived in Braemore, is famous for his physical prowess and marksmanship. He would rescue, single-handed, cattle raided by caterans. His burial place was St Magnus, Spittal, and while the funeral was passing between Conachreig and Backlass in Strathmore on its way thither, it was met by his brother Henry, Rumsdale. The body was wrapped in deer-skin for coffin, and Henry on recognising his brother said, "Death must be strong since he killed Donald." A stone still commemorates the halt, and is called *Clach na Caplich*.

The reason of Spittal being the clan graveyard is conjectured to be that the Hospital was built and dedicated to his uncle Earl Magnus by Earl Ronald, whose grandson Snekkoll Gunn succeeded to the lands there. A more probable theory is that as the hospital was an educational and theological college for monks, and also a travellers' inn after the manner of the hospices of the Roman Catholics in Switzerland, and that as the Gunns were the leading people of the neighbourhood, this almost official Christian cemetery became the desirable resting-place for purely religious reasons. It was the substantial gravestones of well-to-do Gunns which afterwards created the impression that the clan had some hereditary rights over it. God's acre rather than Gunn's acre was the state of the case. But that the land belonged to Snekkoll Gunn and his descendants, before the church and



the Sinclair earls had it, is a supposition which research might authenticate.

An account of a dateless battle at East Clyth between the Gunns and Keiths, in which after much slaughter the former were victorious, reads almost exactly with Provost Sutherland's note of the fight quoted on pages 27 and 28 within.

As the rest of the MS. is unoriginal, being a full transcript of the two Gordons' volume, entering not only into the history of the Gunns, but of Scotland, England, France, and all the world besides, after the antique manner, there is no need to follow it much further. The whole policy of the Gordons, Sinclairs, and Mackays is laboured unnecessarily through. What, however, the author of the MS. has added of his own, is always to be valued; and a few quotations of the kind may close the digest of this windfall of Gunn lore. Of William Gunn or "Cattigh's" slaughter of the Keiths near Golspie, in revenge of the coroner's death, he adds, "If tradition is to be believed, Keith of Ackergill escaped to Helmsdale, but was slain there, the spot where he fell going still by the name of 'The Keith's Field.'" See page 37 within. He simply mentions that McHamish was one of the victorious leaders in the conflict of Aldi-ne-Beth, Strathbrora, in 1542, against Donald Mackay of Farr, Sir Robert Gordon giving "Mack-wic-Kames of Killernan," name and estate. Braemore went with a Gunn heiress to the Munros of Poyntzfield, Ross-shire, who sold it about 1795 to Sir Robert Anstruther. The pursuit of the Mackays and Gunns by the Gordons called "the day of the heather bush," immediately before the battle of Aldgown in 1586, the *Claw-tom-Richi* of Sir Robert, is corrected as *Latha Tom na Fraoish*. To the formidable struggle between the Sinclairs, who had 1500 archers alone, and the Gordons, at Clyne, in October, 1590, a tradition is added that the Gordon family left Dunrobin and took refuge on the island in Loch Brora. The Caithnessmen stemmed the loch to drown them, but some of their guard of 18 men broke down the damming in the night, and created a panic among the besiegers. It is added that survivors of the Gunns from the conflict at Leckmelm were the

instruments of this gallant rescue.

An original description of the battle of Harpsdale Hill in 1594 between the Macivers and the Gunns (see within, page 57) is as follows :—  
“ The main body of the Gunns came from Braemore, the other party of 24 men from Strathly. The Macivers, whose headquarters were Quoycrook, Halkirk, and Achorol, Calder, being informed of the approach of the Gunns from Braemore, advanced to meet them at Harpsdale. They posted themselves on the south-western slope of Harpsdale Hill, in an advantageous position, which was strengthened by a turf wall about 200 yards in length close to their front. The ground before them to the south-west sloped to the river, distant about 300 yards. In a length of 26 chains the stream was fordable in three places, beyond that being too deep. The Gunns advanced to cross the river at what is known as the Pollyhour Ford, to attack in flank, but the Macivers sent sharpshooters to dispute the passage. These were repulsed, and the Gunns drove them up the hill on their main body, which was 550 yards to the north of the ford. A detour was made to the right for advantage of ground, whence they attacked the Macivers on the left flank and front. While the passage was being contested, the Strathly Gunns crossed the river between Tongside and Olgrinmore, the Macivers expecting no danger in that quarter. They detoured to the left until they came in the rear of their enemies without being seen. The Braemore Gunns were before this engaged hand to hand, and the Strathly men attacking the Macivers in the rear soon settled the battle. Very few of the Macivers or Sinclairs escaped. Either Farquhar Maciver or William Sutherland *alias* Abrach, their two leaders, fell while fighting at the ford. A stone pillar erected where he was slain, still stands 200 yards north of the passage. Fifty years ago a large number of graves could be seen where the fight occurred, but the ground is now ploughed.” That burial took place on most battlefields is supported by a tract of 1661 in the “ Harleian Miscellany ” describing the grand second funeral of the Marquis of Montrose, where it is said by one who followed him in his expeditions, that the heaps

of stones on the carcasses of his enemies at Tippermuir and the rest of his victorious battles will for ever preserve his renown. But at his fighting period from 1644 to 1650 the fashion might not be the same as in earlier Scottish epochs. See page 54 within.

The MS. concludes about 1648 when Gordon of Sallagh's continuation of the "Genealogical History of Sutherland" is exhausted on the Gunn subject. Some notes follow on the Mackays, which suggest them to be descended from Moddan, who according to Norse writers "lived in the glens or dales of Caithness," that is, Strathnaver. Magnus Orfi and Count Otto of Thurso were his sons, the latter the Celtic maormor of the north. For this theory Sir Robert Gordon's Martin and his son Magnus are made the equivalents of Moddan and his son Magnus of the sagas. There might have been added the still more striking facts that Otto and Odo are the same name, and that the latter is the acknowledged synonym of the I or Iye so peculiar to the ruling line of Mackay, and the origin of that clan's name. Something desultory on the Sinclairs finishes the work. An attached table of the descent of all the clans is of some general value, though irrelevant.

A genealogy is appended. Regnilda, the daughter of Earl Ronald, is the wife of Eric Slagbrillar in Sutherland, and they are grand parents of Snekoll. The coroner, who died in 1478, was succeeded by James of Killernan, he by William McHamish, he by Alexander, married to a daughter of Iye Mackay of Farr. Alexander had two sons, Big William and Little William, by different marriages. Big William was followed by John Gunn of Navidale, and he by his son Alexander, father of Donald the Hunchback, who was married to a daughter of Major Sutherland of Torbo, by whom he had Alexander, George, and William. George settled in Corrish, and his two sons, Alexander and George, were tenants in Kildonan parish. Alexander had William, Donald, and Robert (all living in 1812); and the other son, George, had Thomas Gunn, who went to India, Alexander, William, and James. For the genealogy the author of the MS.

expresses himself indebted to a MS. history of the clan by Rev. Alex. Sage, Kildonan, lent by Rev. Alex. Gunn, Watten.

There is a preliminary note of the armorial bearings of the Gunns, and another on their music. The McRimmons of the Isle of Skye, hereditary pipers of the Macleods, were the composers and teachers of greatest fame; but the McCarters, pipers of the Macdonalds, and the McGregors in Rannoch, Perthshire, were worthy rivals. Gunns have only false relationship to Celtic music, though they have had several proficient in modern work, which proves that Teutonic blood is no bar to their skill in the poetry of sound. It is odd to hear of their piobrachs, coronachs, failts, quicksteps, and other Gaelic varieties. Their failt begins, "Thou art welcome home, brave McHamish," &c., attuned to "a simple pathetic air." A remnant of a war song, composed and set for the Gunns by one of the McRimmons, a piper of Dunrobin, on occasion of the battle of Torran Dhu, Rogart, in 1517, has survived, and is translated thus:—

In warlike deed aye to the front,  
With coat of mail, sword, dagger, shield,  
McHamish brave then bore the brunt,  
His banner first on battle field.

Ranks broke to each Gunn's scoring steel,  
Macphails, Mackays in hundreds bled,  
Their leaders felt the columns reel,  
Then all their army slain or fled.

#### AN UNDATED ESSAY, ETC.

UNDER the title "Origin of the Clan Gunn," the late Æneas Gunn, solicitor, Edinburgh, wrote 19 pages of MS. heralding his subsequent "History," and some items of it require to be preserved. Gunn, the son of Olaf of Duncansbay, founder of the stock, "being a handsome young man, was ensnared by Margaret, countess of Athol," whatever this may mean, condemnatory or exculpatory. "Afterwards he came to Sutherland, and there married Ingired, daughter of Eric Slagbrillar by Ragnilda, only daughter of Ronald, earl of

Orkney. She inherited half of Orkney, but Harold usurped and obtained the lands. By marriage to her daughter, Gunn enriched his family. Their son Snackol Gunn claimed his grandmother's lands from Earl John, the son of Harold, whom he slew afterwards at Thurso." This is a consistent account of the two earliest Gunns.

On the asserted common origin of the Macleods, Rosses, and Gunns the following taken from the Norse sagas has some gleams of knowledge :— "Leot Aiding was son of Olaf Betling, king of the Ebudae or Hebrides, who was descended from Godred, a Scandinavian. The relation of the Macleods and Rosses may appear by observing Leot's marriage and family. Leot married Frakuark, the second daughter of Modad. Their daughter Steinver married Thorbiot of Rackwick, who had a son Aulver Rosta. From these relationships Rosta, the progenitor of the Rosses, is the grandson of Leot. In the same family he is again related to Leot. Helga, the eldest daughter of Modad, married Earl Haeon of Orkney, who had a daughter, Inibiorg, married to Olaf Betling, king of the isles." It will be remembered that it was Aulver Rosta who burnt Olaf in his castle at Duncansbay, the father of the first Gunn. These Norse details can be compared with the theory of the Celtic origin of Moddan or Modad or Martin.

At the battle of Torran Dhu, Rogart, 1517, the Gunns coming towards the end of the fight precipitated matters, and caused corresponding slaughter. The field was strewn with castaway weapons, and many were thrown into a lake called *Lochan du na Chlainhar*.

About Donald Gunn of Killernan, the Hunchback (*Crottach*), there are notes. "The charters of Killernau and Navidale were burnt by the house of Killernan taking fire in 1690." Donald, the Hunchback, it would seem, was resident at the date of the accident. Gordon of Kilgour obtained Killernan from the Earl of Sutherland, probably on a writ of apprising for debts, and Donald, the McHamish of that time, was threatened with ejection. He assembled 250 of the clan in and around his home, and refused to leave. His father-in-law, Major Sutherland of Torbo, interfered in his

favour, and Badenloch was obtained for him. He had sent his family to Caithness previously, to prevent their being asked as hostages to ratify a settlement of the quarrel. His sons have been already noted, but his eldest daughter Esther married Donald Mackay of Skerray, and was alive in 1723, while the other became Mrs. John Gunn of Kinbrace. William his third son died lieutenant-colonel in the service of Holland in 1741. There is an *N.B.*, "Alexander Gunn of Navidale married a daughter of Donald Mackay, the first Lord Reay."

The Hunchback's eldest son Alexander, who is known as Alexander of Badinloch, was commissary of Sutherland, and an adept in law matters. In 1745-6 he was captain of militia. He married Margaret, daughter of Mackay of Kirtomy, by whom he had a numerous family, the eldest of whom, Alexander, died an officer in the Dutch service, a daughter marrying Major Mackay of Rurachar. By a second marriage with the daughter of Rev. Mr. Rose, Loth, he had William, a lieutenant of the 71st regiment, killed in India in 1780, and Morrison of the same regiment, who died at Gibraltar. Their father Alexander of Badinloch died in 1763, and his male descent became with them extinct. It seems clear that these lieutenants and not the Gunns suggested on page 103 within, were the two boys of whom Rev. Alex. Pope, Reay, wrote in 1772 as sons of the then lately dead chieftain, and whose education was being neglected through poverty.

The essayist next deals with a collateral branch from William Gunn the Little, second son of Alexander, the third Killernan, and termed the Gunns of Kinbrace. William of Killernan gave them this place on wadset for 500 marks. They divided into two branches, the Melbuys and the Acha-naichans, from Donald the Scholar. Rev. Robert Gunn, Latheron, ordained 1775, and who died in 1819, was of the former; and Robert the sennachy, alive in 1806, with William, factor at Castle Leod in 1870, were of the latter. Kinbrace wadset terminated with William, the great-grandson of William the Little. A quarrel about who should grind their corn on a certain day between Kinbrace's widow and her brother-in-law, Donald in

Achnahuagh, caused the crisis. Donald broke the mill rather than lose his point, and the widow immediately carried the wadset parchment to the Earl of Sutherland's factor, Gordon of Embo. What right in prospect he had over it Donald had to sell for 100 merks, Mrs Gunn receiving a higher sum. She married again to William Sutherland of Ausdale, who obtained a lease of Kinbrace, during which he exacted dues and customs beyond the proper rents. A famine there compelled him to sublet it to McHamish of Killernan. His heir sometimes resided at Kinbrace and sometimes at Ausdale, during his minority. On becoming of age, this Sutherland married a daughter of Sutherland of Langwell. The story wants clearness, but it seems related to facts.

Of the Braemore Gunns it is next treated. Robert the coroner's son was Donald, commonly called McRob or Robson, a great warrior. Till George, the last of the Braemores, there are difficult gaps in descent. His heiress Janet married Rev. John Munro, Halkirk, ancestor of Sir George Gunn-Munro of Poyntzfield.

The Cattaig or Bregaul Gunns are traced to John, son of the coroner; the Gunns, Dale, being his representatives.

A dash into general history describes the clan as really having "three different fraterual chieftains, whose principal residences were in Kildonan, Braemore, and Bregaul." The highlands of Caithness and Sutherland, parts of Strathnaver, Strathy, and Strathhalladale were the localities of this "numerous and warlike people." It is risked that they occupied wherever Sweyn, Gunn's eldest brother, had conquered in his defeat of Fraquark and Aulver Rosta of Kinbrace. The quotation of an original description in the MS. "History of the Clan Gunn" may serve for finish to the legal Caithnessman's more immature essay:—"The place where Fraukurk lived is now called Shunachu, where there are very large ruins named Carn Shuin or Sweyn's Cairn. Near is a heap called Carn Aulver. To the south-west, a part of Helmsdale river is Avin Aulver, where it is supposed Aulver Rosta crossed when pursued by Sweyn. In the forest of Sletil,

where the battle was fought, there is a small hill, Craggan Aulver. A large forest surrounded Fraukurk's castle, and it also was set on fire. Helgary below Kildonan commemorates Helga, countess of Orkney, Fraukurk's sister, where there is a ruined round tower; and a small grazing farm has the same name. Straffiod reminds of Liot." But these antiquarianisms belong properly to the history of the Swansons.

Another MS. of two pages is a pedigree of the Sinclairs, apparently an abridgement wholly from Sir Robert Gordon, and for this alone of little value. The name "David Coghill, Tacher," is written on one page several times. Of more importance is a careful list, making three quarto pages, extracted from the parish registers, of every Gunn name from 17th April, 1791, to June, 1818. There is a William Gunn in Asgag or Askaig, married to Elizabeth Gunn, mentioned from 1795 to 1799, and a William Gunn in Asgag, married to Isabella Gunn, who appears in 1812 and 1814 as father of children, probably the same William married twice, and it would seem the uncle of the solicitor Æneas, author of these various unpublished MSS.

#### BRAEHOUR PARCHMENTS AND PAPERS.

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GUNN, Brachour, has generously submitted for present historical purpose a set of documents of sterling worth; and his notes upon them, by letter, are as accurate as illustrative. The endorsement of the earliest of these records is, "Assignation by Hucheon Vain Vic Alister Royson to Alexander Sutherland of Forse, 1624, compd. D. C. S., Wrongous Spoliation." Its full tenor, changed from old Scotch, is:—

Be it known to all men to whom it belongs that I, Hucheon Vain Vic Alest Royis son, in ....., for sums of money due and paid to me by Alexander Sutherland of Forse, about which I hold myself well-contented, satisfied, and completely paid, exonerate, quitclaim, and simply discharge the said Alexander Sutherland, his heirs, executors, and assignees for now and ever; and by these present letters I have made, constituted, created, and ordained,



and by the tenor hereof make, constitute, and ordain the said Alexander Sutherland of Forse, his heirs, executors, and assignees, my very lawful, undoubted, and irrevocable assignees, cessioners, and donatars in and to the claims for wrongous spoliation committed upon me by John M'Keymes in Navidale, and by Alest M'Keymes, his brother. They took and led me captive as their bond slave, and abused myself, to the great consternation of my blood, being his majesty's liege. Thereafter on the same day, being 31st January, 1620, the said John M'Hamish and Alexander M'Hamish intromitted with, despoiled, and took away most wrongfully the whole of my property which follows, namely, 7 oxen, 19 cows in calf, 19 queys, and 3 younger cattle; 12 horses and 2 mares; 70 sheep, all ewes; 40 she-goats; 20 bolls of bere and 40 of oats; £20 in money, taken from myself most cruelly when they led me captive; a bow and quiver worth 20 merks; and household valuables to the amount of £40. Further, the said John M'Hamish and Alexander M'Hamish most wrongfully intromitted with my tack of ....., extending to a three-penny land and a halfpenny land, which would sow 5 bolls of bere and 15 bolls of oats; and they also damaged my houses and peat-stack. All these goods, which were seized and taken away by the beforesaid persons on the above date, I assign to Alexander Sutherland, turning, transferring, surrogating, and substituting the said Alexander Sutherland of Forse and his beforesaid in my turn, right, title, and place, as to the beforesaid spoliation, so far as the same may be extended against the said John and Alexander M'Hamish, their heirs, executors, or assignees, with power to Alexander Sutherland and his beforesaid to summon and prosecute for the said wrongous spoliation, to obtain decrees and put the same into due execution, to apply the benefit of the spoliation to his own and his beforesaid's use and profit, to registrate the said decrees as to spoliation and raise letters upon them for due execution, to give acquittances and discharges thereupon, to compound, transact, agree, and generally to do all other things in the matter that I myself might have done before making the grant. This assignation I bind myself, heirs, and executors to make good, valid, sufficient, and effectual to the said Alexander Sutherland and his beforesaid, to the effect above-written, and from my own proper facts and deeds; in other words, I have neither done, nor shall do, anything in hurt or prejudice of the said assignation of spoliation. For sure observation of the premises, I consent that these presents be registrated in the books of council or in the commissary or sheriffs' books of Caithness or Inverness, there to remain for the future memory of the thing, and if need be to have the strength of the said judges' decrees, letters, and executions of hornings, pointing and valuing the cattle without prejudice to be directed thereon, upon a simple charge of 15 days. For this purpose, I make and constitute ....., and each of them, conjunctly and severally, my lawful procurators.

In witness, these presents, written by William Cook, notary-public, are subscribed, with my hand, by the notary, at my command, because I could not.

write myself, at Dunbeath, 14th June, 1634, before witnesses, John Sinclair of Dunbeath, Walter Innes of Seggetsmilne, James Kinnaird in Latheronwheel, Donald Dunoon in Hiltoun, and Hugh Forbes, grieve in Dunbeath. HUCHEON-VAIN-VIC-ALEST-ROYIS-SON, in ....., by William Cook, notary-public, at the special mandate of Houcheon Vain, the son of Alexander, the son of Roy or Rory. (Signed) WALTER INNES, *witness*; W. COOK, *witness*; HUCHEON FORBES, *witness*.

A Gaelic scholar is alone competent to discuss the names in the deed, but variety of spelling has suggestion. It is unfortunate that the name of the despoiled farm, of 42 acres arable and outrun, has not survived, though it was probably in the neighbourhood of Forse. William Cook, spelt "Cuik," appears as messengers-at-arms in a Bruce Caithness MS. of 2nd September, 1624, in which also Alexander Rorison in Spittal and Magnus Rorison are noticed, an *alias* surname for Gunn.

The following matrimonial contract is of real interest :—

At Dunn, 14th September, 1652. It is appointed, agreed, and matrimonially contracted between John Sutherland of Rangag, for himself, and taking the burden upon him for his son, David Sutherland, and David for himself, on the one part, and Donald Gunn in Westerdale, taking burden upon him for Margaret Gunn, his daughter, and the said Margaret for herself, upon the other part, in the manner, form, and effect as follow :—David Sutherland binds and obliges himself to solemnise the holy bond of matrimony with Margaret Gunn, in the face of Christ's church and holy congregation, as God's word requires, between this date and 1st November next, 1652. Margaret Gunn likewise is willing to accept David as her lawful husband. Each is to entertain the other as becomes lawfully betrothed persons during all the days of their life. What acquisitions of lands, heritages, tacks, steadings, rowms, possessions, annualrents, that is, interest, David shall make in Margaret's lifetime, he binds and obliges himself and his heirs to give such right and title of to her during her life as he shall have himself, and thereafter to the heirs born of them, whom failing to David's nearest heirs and assignees whomsoever. Likewise the said John Sutherland and David his son bind and oblige themselves and their heirs that David is now, and will be at the time of marriage, worth between his own means and what he shall get from his father the sum of 1000 merks, namely, 600 merks in ready money of gold and silver, and 400 merks in horses, mares, oxen, and cows. In contemplation of this marriage, Donald Gunn binds himself and heirs, executors, and assignees, to thankfully pay and deliver to David

Sutherland, in name of dowry and tocher with Margaret Gunn, his daughter, 900 merks, namely, 600 merks in money at Martinmas next after the marriage, and the remaining 300 merks in equivalent horses and cows, at Beltane, 1653. If he fail to pay the 600 merks. or any part of it, he shall pay the interest to David, his wife, and their heirs, infest or not infest, with power to them to pursue upon this contract for what is due within the space of ..... after this date, or any time afterwards, without premonition. David Sutherland binds himself and heirs to lay out 1000 merks Scots on land or at interest Martinmas next, by the special advice and consent of John Gunn, heir apparent of Killernan, and John Gunn, son of the said Donald, on the part of Margaret; and on the part of David, by the consent of David Calder of Scouthel, and William Sutherland in Rumster; and this upon sufficient security to David, Margaret, the longest liver of them, and their children. If they have no children, the 1000 merks on decease of the longest liver of the two shall be divided in halves between the nearest heirs of David and Margaret. This investment cannot be withdrawn, nor the securities changed, except by consent of the persons above nominated. David Calder of Scouthel is cautioner for David Sutherland and his father, and John Gunn, heir-apparent of Killernan, for Donald Gunn and his daughter Margaret. The principals and cautioners and their heirs, conjointly and severally, bind themselves to fulfil the above, the breakers of the conditions to pay to the observers 200 merks. Further, the principal parties bind themselves, heirs, executors, and assignees to keep their cautioners free from being liable to loss and damage through their cautionry. For more security principals and cautioners agree to have these presents registered in the books of council and session or commissary books of Caithness or other judges' books, to have the strength of a decree on which execution may take place on a simple charge of 10 days, and to this effect they constitute ....., and each of them, their procurators.

In witness of this, they have subscribed the contract, written by John Davidson, notary-public in Thurso, with their hands, as follows, the day, year, and place above-mentioned, before these witnesses, namely, Hugh Forbes in Achintoft; Alexander Gunn, son of the said Donald Gunn; and William Forbes, son of the said Hugh. (Signed) HUGH FORBES, *witness*; ALEXANDER GUNN, *witness*; WILLIAM FORBES, *witness*: DAVID SUTHERLAND; DONALD GUNN; JOHN GUNN, *cautioner*; DAVID CALDER, *cautioner*: MARGARET GUNN; WILLIAM SUTHERLAND, *cautioner*.

"David Sutherland was," says Captain Gunn, "the grandson of Forse Sutherland, and wadsetter of Ausdale." Henderson's "Notes," pages 164, 165, makes him the second son of John in Rangag, son of Alexander, ninth laird of Forse, and gives other details. The John Gunn, heir-apparent of

Killernan, who is cautioner, was the eldest son of Alexander M'Hamish, son of the John M'Hamish of Killernau and Navidale who has appeared in the despoiling document of 1624. Alexander M'Hamish, *alias* Gunn, was first married, it is said, to a daughter of the Earl of Caithness, and the heir-apparent was their son. John's brothers William and ..... were killed by Gunns at Tacher, on the way from Killernan to visit their grandfather, the earl, at Girnigoe. See pages 110 and 111 within, where he is wrongly called step-father. This can be none but George the fifth earl, who died in 1643, and he had only one legitimate daughter, Elizabeth Sinclair, Countess of Crawford. Mrs. Gunn of Killernan, if she was his daughter, must have been, like his sons Francis of Stirkoke and Colonel John Sinclair, illegitimate, and she may have been their full sister. Why this contract was written at Dunn is explainable perhaps by the fact that Margaret Sutherland, the lady of Dunn, wife of David Sinclair, was aunt of John Sutherland in Rangag, the ancestor of the Langwells. She afterwards married Charles Calder of Lynegar. The point of dating interest is that Alexander M'Hamish was alive in 1652, and it will be seen a sasine mentions him as so in 1668 also. Donald Gunn in Westerdale was the brother of Sir William Gunn, son of John Gunn (Robson), and Donald's descendants are traceable to this day. He is sometimes called Donald Gunn, Dalemore. John, the heir-apparent, who has been supposed one of the two brothers slain at Tacher, had a sister Catherine who married the Hon. Colonel Æneas Mackay of Melness, son of Donald, Lord Reay, a commissioner for Sutherlandshire in 1661. To them the date 1676 is attached in a pedigree. David Calder of Scouthel was a commissioner for Caithness in 1643-4.

The next document is a well-preserved parchment 17 inches by 10, written in Latin and Scotch, with the original endorsement, "Sasine of Christina Mackay of the lands of Navidale and Balnavaliach, 1668," and a subsequent backing of, "Instrument of sasine in favour of Mrs. Christiana Mackay, spouse of Alexander Gunn, Esquire, of Killernan, 23rd February,

1668," with the notes, "Not registered," and "Liferent of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach." It is translated thus:—

In the name of God, amen: by this present public instrument let it be evidently open to all, and let it be well known, that in the year of the dominical incarnation 1668, the 20th of the month of February, and of the reign of the most excellent our supreme lord, Charles the Second, by the grace of God king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, the 20th year, in the presence of me, notary-public, and the subscribed witnesses, compeared personally an honest man, John Nicolson in Cadboll, as solicitor in the name of the discrete Christiana Mackay, now the wife of Alexander Gunn of Killernan, upon the ground and representative spot of the under-written lands and others, having and holding in his extended hands an alienation or disposition of the liferent of the beforesaid Christiana Mackay for all the days of her life, by the beforesaid Alexander Gunn, of the hereditary proprietary lands and others within-written, done, given, and conceded, namely, all and whole the townships and lands of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach, with the houses, buildings, gardens, tofts, crofts, outsets, insets, shealings, grazings, parts, pendicles, and their universal pertinents whatsoever, lying within the county of Sutherland and parish of Kildonan, as is contained at greater length in the said alienation and disposition, of date at Tongue, day and month beforesaid, 1668. This alienation and disposition, containing at the end of the same the under-written precept of sasine, the beforesaid John Nicolson, solicitor, in the name of the said Christiana Mackay, with the reverence which was becoming, presented to an honest man, Donald Gunn in Killernan, bailie in that part of the said Alexander Gunn, by the beforesaid precept of sasine specially constituted, humbly asking him to administer the duty of his bailieship in that part. The said Donald Gunn, the bailie, thinking the petition of the said John Nicolson, solicitor, just and according to reason, received into his hands the beforesaid alienation and disposition; and, for reading and publishing it the better, delivered it to the under-written notary-public.

The tenor of this precept of sasine, agreeing with the same word for word, follows, indeed, and is so:—And to the effect the said Mistress Christiana Mackay may be with the greater diligence infeft and seised in the said lands and others, generally and particularly liferented, know me to have made, constituted, and ordained, or I, the said Alexander Gunn, by the tenor hereof, make, constitute, and ordain Donald Gunn in Killernan and....., and each of you, conjointly and severally, my bailies in that part, to pass to the grounds of all and sundry the said lands of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach and others above liferented, and there give state and sasine, actual, real, and corporal possession of the same, with houses, buildings yards, tofts, crofts, outsets, shealings, grazings, woods, fisheries, commonities, liberties, privileges,

annexes, connexes, pendants, parts, pendicles, and universal pertinents of the same, and, as said is, to the said Mistress Christiana Mackay, my spouse, in life-rent during all the days of her lifetime, or to her lawful solicitor, attorney, procurator, or other name, the bearer hereof, by delivering earth and stone of the said lands, as use is, which in nowise shall you leave undone. To do this, I commit to you, or any one of you, conjointly and severally, my bailies in that part beforesaid, by these presents, my full and irrevocable power.

After the reading and publishing of the precept of sasine for remembrance, Donald Gunn, bailie in that part beforesaid, by virtue of his office of bailiary when the precept of sasine passed to him, gave, carried over, and delivered, against all mortals who oppose or contradict, state and sasine, actual, real, and corporal possession of all and singular the beforesaid lands of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach, with the houses, buildings, gardens, tofts, crofts, outsets, shealings, grazings, woods, fisheries, commons, liberties, privileges, annexes, connexes, dependencies, parts, pendicles, and their universal pertinents, as lying above, to the beforesaid John Nicolson, as solicitor in the name of the said Christiana Mackay, by delivery of land and stone at the ground of the said lands of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach, as is the custom, according to the form and tenor of the beforesaid alienation and disposition, and of the precept of sasine before-written, in consenting surety in life-rent for all the days of the life of the said Christiana Mackay.

Above all and singular these premises, the beforesaid John Nicolson, solicitor, as I name him above, demanded to be made for himself by me, the under-written notary-public, the present public instrument or more public instruments. These writings were done at the ground and representative spot of the said lands of Navidale and Easter Balnavaliach, between nine and twelve o'clock noon, year, day, month, and reign as above, with present there, Andrew M'Beath in Balnavaliach, William Brebner there, and William M'Donald-Vic-M'Ola there, with several other witnesses to the premises, having been summoned and cited.

And I, indeed, Master Alexander Manson, clerk of the diocese of Ross, by royal authority notary-public, and admitted by the lords of council according to the tenor of the act of parliament, because to all and singular the premises, whilst, as is so premised, they were being said, acted, and done, together with the before-named witnesses there, personally I was present, I have seen, known, and heard them thus to be done, and I have finished thence, faithfully written with my own hand, this present public instrument, and into this public form have I reduced the instrument, and have signed it with my seal, name, and surname, usual and accustomed, in faith, force, and testimony of the truth of all and singular the premises, I having been cited and asked, ALEXANDER MANSON.

The notary's device signature is a square enclosing the words

"Alexander Manson, *Manent meliora*," that is, "Better things remain." His footing as by "royal authority," is an innovation, for Bryce in "The Holy Roman Empire," says that "it was declared by civilians and canonists that no public notary could have any standing, or attach any legality to the documents he drew, unless he had received his diploma from the emperor or the pope. A strenuous denial of a doctrine so injurious was issued by the parliament of Scotland under James III. Nevertheless, notaries in Scotland, as elsewhere, continued for a long time to style themselves *ego auctoritate imperiali* (or *papali*) *notarius*." The Hon. Christina Mackay of the conveyance was the daughter of Donald, the first Lord Reay, by his fifth wife, Marjory, daughter of Francis Sinclair of Stirkoke. Henderson says she "married in 1650 Alexander Gunn of Killernan, and was in 1668 infest in liferent in lands of Navidale, etc., on disposition by her husband." If Gunn's first wife was a daughter of George, the fifth earl of Caithness, and therefore sister of Francis of Stirkoke, the second wife must have been the grand-niece of the first. It is discussed whether Marjory was ever married to Lord Reay, but Mackay in his "History" has a collection of proofs of marriage which deserves consideration. Mrs. Gunn's sister, Margaret Mackay, died at Thurso in 1720; and they had three brothers, William, Charles, and Rupert.

From old Caithness registers the following was, copied:—

George Gunn of Braemore admitted being due to Angus Gunn, his brother, the sum of 500 merks Scots, the full and complete provision which he can claim of the effects of his deceased father, John Gunn of Braemore, and Isabella Mackay, his wife, their father and mother, by contract of marriage, bonds, tacks, obligations, or others whatsoever, granted by the deceased John Gunn to the said Angus Gunn. The tenor of the provision was that the said John Gunn bound and obliged himself to pay to Angus 500 merks between its date and the term of Whitsunday next after his decease, whenever that might happen according to the pleasure of God. Angus received complete payment on 2nd July, 1713.

By the "Services of Heirs," John Gunn of Braemore died in 1706, and his son George of Braemore was served heir special to him of the wadset of

Braemore, which was 6000 merks, the Gunns being wadsetters and not proprietors of that place till 1752. Their male lineage ended in George, whose only daughter and heiress, Janet, married the Rev. John Munro, Halkirk, a portion of whose will runs thus :—

Janet Gunn is my wife, with consent of the deceased George Gunn of Braemore, her father ; and the said George, as burden-taker for her in contemplation of the marriage then contracted and afterwards solemnised, bound and obliged himself, his heirs, executors, and assignees to pay as tocher or dowry with his said daughter 1000 merks Scots within a year and a day after solemnising of the marriage, another 1000 merks within two years after the marriage, and a third 1000 merks at the decease of himself and Ann Bain, his wife, or the longest liver of the two, in the case of no children being procreated between them, as is more fully described in the said minute. In this minute there was a contract, dated 21st June, 1714, perfected and subscribed by the said George Gunn, by which, in corroboration of the minute, he bound himself and heirs, that the first 2000 merks of the minute should be paid the following Martinmas, and the other sum as stated. And now seeing that the first 2000 merks were paid to me and discharged ; and that George had no other children living at his death except Janet Gunn, my wife, on which ground the third 1000 merks became payable to me at the time of Ann Bain's decease ; and that John Gunn of Braemore, my eldest son, has, by a writing subscribed on this date for the reason therein contained, consented to my granting a bond of provision to his brothers and sisters, George, Robert, Henry, David, and Janet Munro, to the extent of 11,000 merks Scots, to be by me proportioned between them ; and that he has renounced all right to my movable and heritable effects at my decease up to this sum of 11,000 merks, without prejudice to his rights in my property beyond that amount ; therefore I discharge John Gunn, born Munro, my eldest son, and all other heirs of the said George Gunn of Braemore, as to the 1000 merks payable to me at the death of his relict, Ann Bain. Signed at Halkirk, October 14th, 1737, JOHN MUNRO ; JAMES BUDGE of Toftingall, *witness* ; MALCOLM GROAT of Wares, *witness*.

Renunciation and discharge by John Gunn of Braemore :—Considering that the deceased George Gunn of Braemore, my grandfather, conveyed to me the township and lands of Braemore, with the burden of 17,000 merks upon them, according to the wadset, right of reversion, trustable bonds, rights, and securities granted to me, and the infeftments following on the same, together with all debts and sums, heritable and movable, and considering that Janet Gunn, my mother, was the only lawful daughter of the said George Gunn. . .

The rest is wanting, but can easily be imagined from the tenor of the provision made, as above, by the Rev. John Munro, Halkirk, to his younger



children. His son George received 3000 merks, and the others mentioned 2000 merks each, the proportioning being made on 23rd December, 1740. In 1788 George was noted, "George Gunn Munro of Braemore, a merchant in London, of moderate estate." A list of heritors and wadsetters by Henderson has a "George Gunn of Braemore" as in 1675, for "John."

A curious and, it may be, essential event in Gunn history is introduced by "Letters of advocation at the instance of George Gunn, tacksman of Corrish, against the bailies of regality of Sutherland and their procurator-fiscals," as described in pencil on the back, an older ink endorsement being "Proceedings against George Gunn, 1736." He was a younger son of the McHamish called the Hunchback, Donald Crottach.

George II., king of Great Britain, &c. It is humbly meant and shown to us by our beloved George Gunn, tenant in Corrish, in the county of Sutherland, that William Sutherland of Thomshill, and John Clunes, bailies of different parts of Sutherland, have of late issued their respective warrants to seize upon and apprehend the person of the said George Gunn, and incarcerate him within a low dungeon adjoined to the church of Dornoch, because there is no tolbooth or prison-house within the county; and this upon an information said to be exhibited to them, or to one or other of the said bailies, by John Polson in Easter Helmsdale, of the said George Gunn's having falsified the said John Polson's bill, payable to the said George Gunn himself, for £4 sterling money, as the value and price of a mare sold by the said George Gunn to the said John Polson. On the narrative of the said pretended warrant and information, the said William Sutherland of Thomshill, 2nd February instant, issued a precept, at the instance of John Fraser, procurator-fiscal of the said regality, setting forth that the said George Gunn could not be found to execute the said warrant against him, and that it was plain he had absconded, and taken guilt upon himself, and therefore warranting the officers of the said regality to pass, in his majesty's name and authority, and in name and authority of the said bailie, and to command and charge the said George, personally, or at his dwelling-house, and at Brora, head burgh of the said regality, to deliver himself to the said bailie, to underlie the law for the beforesaid crime, within fifteen days next after the charge, under the penalty of being held and decreed rebel and fugitive, and of his having his goods and his gear escheated and inbrought to the said procurator-fiscal's use. The said bailie's precept, with a short note of the charge (left at his dwelling-house on 3rd February instant) subjoined under the hand of Hugh Hay, regular officer, and two witnesses subscribing the same, has been shown to the lord-justice clerk and lords commissioners of judiciary. In this action and

cause the said bailie of regality intends to proceed to give sentence, although he is in nowise judge competent.

It is of verity that the said information is purely malicious and without the least foundation. Upon a fair trial it will be incontestably proved, as is necessary, that the said John Polson really and truly accepted the £4 bill payable to George Gunn, an innocent ignorant person, or at least that he adhibited a writing thereto in the form of his own subscription, which he (who himself was possessed of the very bill itself) acknowledged in diverse companies before unexceptionable famous witnesses to be genuine and true.

But this information is procured and instigated by the bailies themselves. At any rate, it is intended to secure the profit to themselves and the fiscal of the said George's effects, right or wrong, as appears evident, not only from the form and method of the precept above-recited, but also from the unnecessary and insinuous labours of the said John Clunes, the other bailie, who himself not a person concerned, and not the informer, or even the fiscal, has been at vast pains to ensnare the said George Gunn, and persuade him to come to his measures. This appears by two successive letters directed by him to George Gunn, both dated in the month of January last, the first of them the very day immediately after the date of the first warrant issued against George Gunn. Copies of these were produced to the said lords, because the said George Gunn could not with safety trust the originals with the express, lest he should be seized by Mr Clunes and his party.

Further, the said George Gunn apprehends that if there were pretext, as there is not, for loading him with the crime of forgery, the same cannot regularly be tried before any inferior criminal court in the first instance, which is expressly agreeable to the opinion of Sir George Mackenzie; and although there may be an instance that the court of justiciary was appointed to be of the number of the lords of session in a prosecution of this kind tried before the court in the first instance, yet the writer is advised that there is no instance where the like was found competent before any inferior criminal judge.

Moreover, the said William Sutherland and John Clunes, bailies, have discovered great partiality and keenness in this matter, and have already committed most manifest iniquity; in so far as the said John Clunes, as appears by the letters before noticed, practised all in his power to bring George Gunn under the snare of compounding for a delict or crime of which he never was guilty, partly by flattery and partly by threats and menaces; and in so far as the parallel of the said William Sutherland the other bailie's procedure, as George Gunn is advised, has never been practised by any inferior criminal judge. He is instructed that the lord-justice-clerk and lords commissioners of justiciary, who are supreme judges, could not issue precepts of the nature of that above-

recited given out by the bailie of regality, and that such procedure is authorised by no law yet known. If the trial of crimes proceeds upon citation, when the party has left him not only a copy of the libel and list of witnesses and assizers, and if, after the *induciae legales* are out, he absents, the judge may proceed according to the known forms and to the powers competent to him. But because of a warrant, issued by an inferior judge on informations, not succeeding in apprehending the person complained upon when he may be about his lawful affairs without the bounds of his jurisdiction, that therefore, as in the case of the precept already issued, this inferior judge shall adjudge him guilty of the crime, and to have absconded from justice, and upon such uncharitable judgment shall, as this bailie-deputy has done, give further precepts charging the party to deliver himself up within 15 days to be tried, under the penalty of rebellion, denunciation, and escheat, with an intention against that day to proceed and accordingly fugitate, denounce, and adjudge the escheat of the party to the fiscal, as seems demonstratively plain to be the view of the bailie, is such a model of prosecution as has never been heard of.

From this the said lords could perceive how wrongfully and unjustly the said bailies of the said regality of Sutherland have proceeded, and still intend to proceed, in the matter, wherein they have already committed palpable partiality and most manifest and gross iniquity; and therefore the before-said criminal warrants, precepts, action and cause, trial and cognition of the said matter, and whole points thereof, with all that has followed or may follow thereon, ought and should be advocated or withdrawn from the said bailies of the said regality of Sutherland to the lord-justice-general, justice-clerk, and lords commissioners of justiciary, or to the lords of council and session in the first instance, as the only judges competent and unsuspected; and the said judges of the said regality court of Sutherland, and all other inferior judges, ought and should be discharged from cognising, determining, or proceeding therein by their offices in that part in time to come, for the reasons and causes before said.

Our will is, etc. Given under our signet at Edinburgh, 12th February, 1736, the 9th year of our reign. By order of the lords commissioners of justiciary. Thus it is subscribed, JOHN DAVIDSON. Signed 13th February, 1736.

By virtue of the principal letters of advocation, whereof the above and two preceding pages are an exact and complete copy to the will thereof, which is dated and signed at Edinburgh 12th and 13th February instant, and of his majesty's reign the 9th year, raised at the instance of George Gunn, tacksman in Corrish, in the county of Sutherland, complainer therein specified, in his majesty's name and authority, I William Ross, messenger, command and charge you, John Fraser, procurator-fiscal of the regality of Sutherland, to compare before the lord-justice-general, lord-justice-clerk, and commissioners of justiciary, within the criminal court-house of Edinburgh, 16th March next, at the hour of cause, bringing with you the criminal warrants, precepts, action and cause, trial

and cognition of the matter mentioned and contained at length in the said letters of advocation, whole acts, interlocutors, and minutes of process made, if any, to be seen and considered by the said lords, and to hear and see the same advocated and withdrawn to themselves, and you discharged from all further proceeding therein in time coming, for the reasons and causes mentioned in the said advocation, the lords having advocated the beforesaid action and cause from the bailies of the said regality to themselves, discharging you the said John Fraser and others mentioned from all further trying, meddling, judging, or cognoscing in the said matter, with certification to you conformably to the advocation in all points. This I do 23rd February, 1736, before these witnesses, Andrew Forbes, lawful son to Arthur Forbes, custom-house officer in Dornoch, and Robert Thain, servant to David Ross, writer in Tain, and the said David Ross. WILLIAM ROSS, messenger.

The story of the bill is told with clearness by Captain Gunn, Brae-hour. George Gunn, tacksman of Corrish, was brother of the chief, McHannish, Alexander Gunn of Badinloch, the latter dying in 1763. The wife of George was a daughter of Polson, Easter Helmsdale, father of John Polson of the letters of advocation. Her brother John bought a horse from her husband at £4, for which George took his bill. She surreptitiously gave the bill back to John Polson; and George Gunn, thinking he had lost it, wrote out a copy of it from memory, the signature of his brother-in-law also written. On this memorandum he pursued for the debt. When the case was called in court, John Polson pretended that he had paid the bill, and produced the original as proof. The character of George Gunn's copy was then discovered, and the local judges seem to have taken the worst view of it as a forged paper, John Polson's name at the end appearing to them absolute evidence of forgery. It would look as if the lords of the court of session entertained quite a different opinion of the transaction, in advocating the case before themselves. The fault, if any, of George Gunn, was perhaps in innocently using what was only a copy of an original bill as if it were the original, to compel payment of a debt justly owing to him. In legal casuistry the question is of considerable interest, and what ultimate decision was made could perhaps be yet discovered.

A characteristic scene took place at the first court held at Dornoch on

the so-called forgery case. When George Gunn's copy-bill was produced, his brother the McHamish, Alexander Gunn of Badinloch, asked to see it, and rising to the window with it as if for better light he tried to swallow the paper. The whole court sprang upon him to prevent his intention, and a regular fight took place, McHamish brandishing a chair in defence till he had succeeded in his attempt. Clunes in Crakaig, possibly the bailie mentioned, had a blow on the side of the face which cured a tumour the doctors gave up as incurable, his humorous thankfulness to McHamish's surgical skill being one of the points of the rest of his life. It is probable that this scene accentuated the local feeling that George Gunn was guilty of forgery, the brother's anxiety taking so violent a form.

To have hanged a man and confiscated his property, on a technicality, when he clearly meant no wrong to any one, would have been the stupidest of judicial iniquities. The culprits of the affair were Mrs Gunn and her brother, John Polson, *alias* Macphail, *alias* Mackay; their intentions and acts being manifestly evil.

Let a memorial of 1759 by Lieutenant John Gunn come now :—

To the most high, puissant, and most noble prince, Archibald Campbell, Duke of Argyll, Marquis of Lorn, keeper of the great seal of Scotland, lord-chief-justice-general, chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, admiral of the Western Isles, &c, The memorial of John Gunn, lieutenant in General Armiger's regiment of foot, most humbly sheweth,

That he has had the honour of serving his Majesty all the last and present wars; is now the eldest lieutenant except one in the above regiment; that he was at the battle of Dettingen, where he was wounded, Fontenoy, the siege of Ostend, and the reduction of Guadeloupe, and has been on duty in North America; that he has constantly attended his duty, to the satisfaction of his superior officers, for the truth of which he begs leave to refer your Grace to Lord Ligonier and Generals Waper and Armiger; and that he is willing to go to any part of the world which his Majesty's service may require.

If recommended to his Majesty for the command of a company of Highlanders, he thinks he could raise them mostly of his own surname in Caithness, where he was born, and in Sutherland, as Captain Alexander Gunn, namely, M'Kaims, his cousin, did for the service of the government in the year 1715, and also in the late rebellion. He speaks the Highland language, and is well

acquainted with the military spirit and honour which so generally attend the Highlanders, when well used and conducted, of which he has often been eye-witness.

The memorialist, therefore, most humbly prays that your Grace will have the goodness to recommend him to his Majesty for the command of a company, on any corps his Majesty shall think proper, which is most humbly submitted.

These are to certify that Lieutenant John Gunn of Armiger's regiment, but formerly of the 12th regiment, to which I have the honour of being colonel, and in which he served in Flanders and Germany all last war, and since in Minorca and England, till the separation of the two battalions, has always behaved himself with diligence, exactness, and fidelity, to the entire satisfaction of his superior officers, and so as to merit his royal highness the duke's favour whilst he commands the army. Under my hand this 12th December, 1759, ROBERT WAPER, lieutenant-general and colonel of the 12th regiment of foot. *A true copy.*

The above Lieutenant John Gunn served in the regiment I had some time ago the honour to command in Germany and Flanders. He always behaved himself very well, and signalised himself at the battle of Fontenoy. JOHN COSSBY, lately lieutenant-colonel of the beforesaid regiment.

Lieutenant Gunn having applied to me for a testimony of his good behaviour and character during the time he has been under my command, I hereby declare, by the best information I could get from his superior officers and others, that I believe him to be a very gallant, able, and deserving officer; and he has distinguished himself both in the last and present war as such. London, North Audley Street, 17th December, 1759. LIGONIER.

The following letter of 1761, addressed, "To Mrs. Dow at Thurso, Caithness," by the same Gunn, who is then captain, is illustrative:—

Madam,—I wrote you lately under cover to Mr. Adam. On the 12th instant I march hence for Dundee, where my family is to settle, and thence to Newcastle, to complete with drafts, and so embark for Germany. This will be my twelfth campaign, and though you blame me for asking to go over, it would nevertheless have to be so, as we are to be completed. Besides, two of our captains who wish to sell out, and a third captain because of his health, have come over, so that I must have gone at any rate. I hope to be able to send you good news, if I should be spared, and to see my old acquaintances, *messieurs* the Frenchmen, turn backs and run like lusty fellows. I am persuaded this would give real joy to such a firm Whig as you, for you have always been on our side. I have made Corporal Charles Calder a serjeant now; and James Ogilvy, on account of his parents and friend, a corporal. I shall make Mr Sutherland's son my servant, which will be better than a serjeant. Please give my compliments

to his mother, and in the kindest manner to your daughters, and also to Elizabeth Smith. I should be glad if either you or she could send my sister word of my going abroad. Remember me also to good James Lowry, and all that society; and I beg their and your remembrance, though I lament and confess I am unworthy of their or your regard. Mrs. Gunn would be glad to hear from you, as well as from Mrs. Donaldson. You will thus know when Mrs. Gunn hears from me. Be so good as remember me to all acquaintances with you, if you and Mrs. Donaldson think proper. My next will be from Newcastle. Being in haste, I now desire to recommend you, your....., and the godly among you to God and the riches of His grace. Dear Madam, with regard, your always greatly honoured, humble, most obedient servant, JOHN GUNN. Aberdeen, 10th March, 1761.

*P.S.*—I have sent express for Lieutenant Rose, who I hope marches from Thurso to-day or to-morrow, as I wait at Dundee for him, where I have commanded the whole to join me with all speed. Dear Madam, I must again and again bid you and good "Munney" farewell and farewell. Be so good as seal and send the enclosed to Lady Southdunn. I have the two men who deserted from me at Thurso, on 3rd September, here in irons.

This veteran was the illegitimate son of John Gunn of Kinbrace, and he had a daughter whose descendants are still traceable. In his memorial he calls himself cousin to Captain Alexander Gunn of Badinloch, the McHamish; which he was, once removed, his father being first cousin to Alexander. The Gunns were Hanoverian Whigs and not Jacobites, as is clear from Captain John's statement that this McHamish raised companies to oppose the Stuarts in the 1715 and 1745 rebellions. Each company numbered 100 men. That of 1745 arrived at Inverness on 25th October, officered by the above Captain Alexander Gunn, Lieuteuant John Gordon, and Ensign Kenneth Sutherland of the Thorboll family. The battle of Dettingen, Bavaria, in which John Gunn was wounded, took place on 27th June, 1743; that of Fontenoy on 11th May, 1745; and the reduction of the French West Indian island of Guadeloupe in 1759. John Gunn of Kinbrace was son of George of Borrobol, the second son of Alexander, the McHamish of Killernan and Navidale in 1650. The later Alexander of the rebellions was (see page 126 within) served heir to his father Donald Gunn in Badinloch, the Crottach or Hunchback McHamish, in 1723, and

is described as Alexander of Wester Helmsdale, the affairs of Killernan having before then disastrously closed.

What is most important in the connection is that it was through descent from John of Kinbrace, the soldier's father, that George Gunn, Rhives, claimed to be the McHamish in 1814. On the same ground, George's father, Hector Gunn, Thurso, was served heir in 1803 to his great-great-grandfather, Alexander Gunn of Killernan and Navidale; the McHamish whose biography balances about 1650, and of whom much has already been detailed. Before touching on the controversy as to who is the rightful chief of the clan, the following parchment must be given, in its original Latin and in English, because of its special importance. Its size is 14½ inches by 7, and it is written in the beautiful monkish hand of old charters. The endorsement is *Gen. Retornatus Hectoris Gunn abavo, 1803*, "The general return of Hector Gunn to his great-great-grandfather, 1803." Its text runs:—

*Haec inquisitio facta fuit in curia vicecomitatus de Caithness, tenta apud Thurso trigesimo primo die Maii, anno Domini millesimo octingentesimo tertio, coram Magistro Gulielmo Brodie, vicecomite substituto dictae vicecomitatus, per hos probos et fideles patria homines subscriptos, videlicet, Capitaneum Jacobum Mackay de Borgie, Georgium Paterson, armigerum, balivum de Thurso; Magistros Alexandrum Paterson, Jacobum Craig, Jacobum Waters, Joannem Mackay, Alexandrum Brodie, Petrum Swany, juniorem, et Patricium Leith, omnes mercatores in Thurso; Magistros Donaldum Robeson, Gulielmum Sinclair, et Joannem Reid, scribas ibidem; Magistros Gulielmum Munro et Joannem Macdonald, ludimagistros ibidem; et Georgium Morrison, carporem ibidem. Qui jurati dicunt, magno sacramento interveniente, quod quondam Alexander Gunn MacHamish de Navidale et Kilearnan, communiter vocatus MacHamish quintus, princeps tribus de Gunn, abavus Hectoris Gunn, mercatoris in Thurso, latoris praesentium, obiit ad fidem et pacem publicam, et quod dictus Hector Gunn, lator praesentium, est legitimus et propinquior haeres masculus dicti quondam Alexandri Gunn, sui abavi, et quod est legitimae aetatis. In cujus rei testimonium, sigilla quorundem eorum qui dictae inquisitioni intererant, cum brevi S. D. N. regis directoris intus clauso, una cum sigillo et subscriptione Joannis Rose, clerici dictae vicecomitatus, sunt appensa, decimo quinto die mensis Junii, anno Domini praedicto, Sic subscribitur, JOHN ROSE.*

*Haec est vera copia principalis retornatus super praemissis in cancellaria S. D. N. regis remanentis, extracta, copiata, et collata per me, Thomam Miller, substitutum,*



*Jacobi Dundas, deputati Domini Jacobi St. Clair Erskine, de Sinclair, baronetti ejusdem, cancellariæ directoris, sub hac mea subscriptione, THOMAS MILLER.*

The English of the return is,—

This inquisition was made in the sheriff-court of Caithness, held at Thurso, 31st May, 1803, in the presence of Mr. William Brodie, sheriff-substitute of the said county, by these subscribed honest and faithful men of the country, namely, Captain James Mackay of Borgie, George Paterson, arms-bearing, bailie of Thurso; Messrs. Alexander Paterson, James Craig, James Waters, John Mackay, Alexander Brodie, Peter Swany, junior, and Patrick Leith, all merchants in Thurso; Messrs. Donald Robeson, William Sinclair, and John Reid, solicitors there; Messrs. William Munro and John Macdonald, schoolmasters there; and George Morrison, vintner there. These being sworn, having given their solemn oath, say that the deceased Alexander Gunn, the McHamish, of Navidale and Killernan, commonly called McHamish the Fifth, chief of the clan Gunn, great-great-grandfather of Hector Gunn, merchant in Thurso, bearer of the presents, died in the public faith and peace, and that the said Hector Gunn, bearer of the presents, is the legitimate and nearest heir-male of the said deceased Alexander Gunn, his great-great-grandfather, and that he is of lawful age. In testimony of this matter, the seals of those of them who were present at the said inquiry, with the brief of our sovereign lord the king's director within enclosed, together with the seal and subscription of John Rose, clerk of the said sheriffdom, have been appended, on 15th June, in the year of the Lord before said. Thus it is subscribed, JOHN ROSE.

This is a true copy of the original return on the subject preserved in the chancery of our sovereign lord the king, extracted, copied, and edited by me, Thomas Miller, as substitute for James Dundas, the depute of Lord James St. Clair Erskine, of Sinclair, baronet of the same, director of chancery, under my subscription, THOMAS MILLER.

Much light is thrown on this state document, which would seem finally to settle the much-disputed M'Hamish question, by a letter addressed, "Mr Hector Gunn, merchant, Thurso," dated outside 26th August, 1803. Its inside contents are :—

Lyon Clerk's Office, Edinburgh, 13th August, 1803. These are to certify that there are no arms for the name of Gunn recorded in the record of arms for Scotland, ANDREW CRAIG MCLEHOSE, for Mr. Alexr. Boswell, L.C.D.

Edinburgh, 26th August, 1803. Sir,—I have retoured your service to chancery, and taken out an extract of the return, so that you are now the chief

of the clan Gunn. On a search at the Lyon Office, however, I can find no arms for that name recorded there; and prefixed you have a certificate from the Lyon Clerk to that purpose. It will cost you £14 or £15 to obtain arms of any kind from that office, and £32 at least to obtain arms with supporters, which the chief of every name is entitled to. If there are any lands belonging to the family to whom you are served heir, your general service gives you right to claim; but I suspect the long prescription has run against you, unless it has been interrupted by many and long minorities. I subjoin a note of the expenses incurred here, from which you will see that the £5 sent me by Mr Sinclair is expended, and a balance due me. If you do not wish anything further to be done, you may please remit this balance, and the retour of your service and other papers shall be sent as you desire. I am, sir, your most obedient, honoured servant, JAMES ROBERTSON.

Account: Mr Hector Gunn, merchant in Thurso, to James Robertson, writer to the signet. February 7th, 1803, Postage from you about your claim to the chieftaincy of clan Gunn, 11d; February 16th, Wrote you fully in answer, copy, 8d; March 5th, Postage from you again, 11d; March 8th, To drawing memoir to obtain brieve at Chancery in your favour, and copy, 5s 8d; Paid clerk's dues of the brieve, 5s; March 9th, Wrote you fully therewith, giving directions about the service, copy, 1s 4d; To perusing the proofs sent, and drawing claim for you, 10s 6d; Paid for writing the same, fair copy, 2s; Paid for making copy of your genealogical tree, 5s; Making notarial copy petition for you to the justices of the peace, 3 sheets, 5s 6d; To ditto of another petition for you, 4 sheets, 7s; To ditto, deposition of John Gunn, 5 sheets, 8s 6d; To ditto, of Angus Mackay, 5 sheets, 8s 6d; To ditto, of Robert Gunn, 2 sheets, 4s; July 29th, Having received the brief and retour of your service, paid for retouring the same to Chancery, £1 2s; August 13th, Paid Lyon Clerk for search and certificate at the Lyon office for the arms of the Gunns, 5s; Trouble respecting the search, 5s; August 26th, Wrote you with certificate, copy, 8d; To agency, trouble, and correspondence in February last, and for attending the Chancery office, &c., £1 1s; To clerks, postages, and incidents, 5s; Total £6 4s 2d. Deduct, By cash to account on 29th July per Mr Sinclair, £5. Remains, £1 4s 2d.

Edinburgh, 26th July, 1804. Received from Mrs Gunn £1 4s 2d sterling, being the balance of the above account, hereby discharged; and the extract of her husband's retour, and all the papers belonging to him, are herewith delivered up. JAMES ROBERTSON.

The three depositions mentioned in the account were by Robert Gunn, Achnakin, an elder in Kildonan church; James Mackay, Strath Halladale; and John Gunn, Dalnaha. Something may be said of notable persons of

the inquisition. The *Gentleman's Magazine* has this, "Died at Thurso, co. Caithness, Bailie George Paterson, chief magistrate, 14th August, 1823, born there 13th August, 1726, having thus entered his 98th year. He was 58 years chief magistrate, 50 an elder of the church, schoolmaster of Thurso 52, and resided at the house he died in 66 years." John Macdonald, schoolmaster, is "The Apostle of the North," born in Reay, and best known as Rev. Dr. Macdonald of Ferintosh. Munro was also Rev. and an A.M., his fame as a teacher being widespread, Reay having had his services before Thurso. About the personal respectability of the inquisition there can be no doubt, though the decision in favour of Hector Gunn as chieftain has been persistently disputed. A published letter, dated Strathmore, Halkirk, 13th May, 1890, warns against belief in genealogical trees prevalent among the clan, which set forth that no one has held the chieftaincy since Lieutenant William Gunn, who was killed in India in 1782. On the contrary, "Hector Gunn, Thurso, was in 1803 served heir to the chieftaincy, and after his death George Gunn, factor, Rhives, his son, was served heir to the chieftaincy in the year 1814. . . . I have in my possession the services of the above two chiefs, written in Latiu on parchment." Hector's has been given, but it would be well, though not practically necessary, to have George's also in print. If the former is sound, its follower must be so incontestably. Till the latter appear, it has an effective equivalent in the following communication addressed, "George McHamish Gunn, Esquire :"—

A.O., 18th October, 1814. My dear Sir,—I yesterday obtained your papers from Finlaison, and I now enclose you the brief on parchment, with the original examination of witnesses, and a tree of the family. I also enclose a treatise concerning the clan from the time of *your* (I may say *our*) great forefather, the Caithness coroner, to the present. I have kept a copy of the tree and the treatise. I have still a notarial copy of the examination of witnesses in my possession, which I would now have sent, but that the frank will not contain it. I will, however, send it to you by some conveyance. In the meantime, I am not aware of the notarial copy assisting you in your search for the arms. Do me the favour, if you please, to acknowledge the receipt of this

letter, because I shall be anxious to hear of the safe arrival of your papers. Give me a note of the different services whereon you have been employed in the Mediterranean, etc., and the dates, that I may get extracts attested by the secretary of such dispatches as mention your name. Your doing this will much assist me in looking for these papers. With every good wish for your welfare and happiness, I am, with best compliments to Mrs. Hood, My dear M<sup>r</sup>Hamish the Twelfth, Yours most faithfully, GEORGE GUNN.

*P.S.*—I had a letter to-day from my father. The old folks are still alive and as well as people at their age can hope to be.—G. G.

Next to the Latin document of 1814 serving Lieutenant George Gunn, R.N., factor, Rhives, heir to the chieftancy, this letter to him must take its place for importance. Directly or indirectly the whole story of his installation is told by it, and its genuine and enlightening character is apparent. In itself it is a most precious charter or title-deed.

Another letter to the same, addressed, "George Gunn, Esqre., Factor for the Marquis of Stafford, Assynt," is as follows:—

Thurso, 3rd September, 1821. Mr Gunn, Dear Sir,—Our intention of writing you and giving you this trouble is that our name was near to be buried in oblivion, and that in former times there was gaining the world by strength of arm, but now people must fall upon better method for providing for future accidents and distress. Therefore our intention (as proposed by some of our best men) was to form ourselves into a society, by which we should come to know the strength of our number. There are none to be admitted but those that can spell Gunn as their name. By several circumstances, and owing to the way that Sutherlandshire was flitted [cleared], we have most of the clan in this country, except a few in the army. We expect to muster about 200 men to form the society, who, will, it is proposed, wear the clan tartan at the yearly meeting. The time of commencing thought to be most convenient is at or about Martinmas, when we shall look upon it as the greatest satisfaction that could be bestowed on us at the time, to have your presence as president at the meeting. It would also encourage the poor dispersed to gather from every corner, which they are very keen upon, so far as we have heard from them. We are to be looking for your opinion, and also if you are to attend, by course of post, when we shall know better what time we should meet together. We are at every exertion to gather names, but we do not intend to go further until we hear from you; so we must wait to have your letter to show to them to encourage them. No doubt we are strangers to you, but not altogether without relationship, which would be kept very affectionately by our forefathers. We remain, with

best wishes to you, Your most obedient servants, DONALD GUNN, Braehour; ALEXANDER GUNN, merchant, Thurso.

The former of these subscribers was father of Captain Gunn, the other being of the Achnakin family, Kildonan, son of the witness Robert of 1803. It was in 1820 that George, the McHamish, became factor in Assynt, and on getting the appointment he retired from the Royal Navy on half pay. In 1824 he was promoted to the factorship at Dunrobin Castle. Before giving some account of this Gunn Society, which anticipated the Mackay Society, the last of these Braehour invaluable MSS. must have its place. It is addressed, "George Gunn, Esqre., Lochinver," the factor of Assynt, and reads :—

Swiney, 1st April, 1823. My dear Sir,—It is now so long since we have communicated with each other that we are almost worn out of acquaintance. I intended to have written soon after your men left here, as I was very anxious to hear of their safety, which I did immediately on their arrival at home. I intend setting out to-morrow for Inverness, and will leave this and a copy of the regulations of our society at Ardgay. We will expect your attendance at the annual meeting on the last Tuesday of June, for the day has been changed of purpose to secure your presence. We have only 61 members yet, but I expect that we shall make out 100 before the end of the year.

Have you no intention of getting spliced? The clan will absolutely mutiny unless you bestir yourself and leave a pistol to succeed you. To be serious, I fear you are become a determined bachelor. Perhaps you are only waiting to see the issue of Prince Hill's expedition lest you should be called off in the middle of the honeymoon.

May I request the favour from you to send Cathil M'Kenzie of the men who were here last season, and send the names of those crews who intend to come to us this season, as we shall not lay in any more stock than is exactly necessary for the number of boats we may expect. They will get the same price as is paid on this coast by any respectable curer. I regret that I could not send you any red herrings last year as we made none, but I hope this will not be the case again. Make offer of my best respects to Miss Gunn and to all my Assynt acquaintances. I shall expect to hear from you at your earliest convenience. I am, My dear Sir, Yours most truly, J. GUNN.

This Lieutenant John Gunn, merchant in Swiney, was the first president of the Loyal and United Benevolent Society of the Clan Gunn, instituted at Thurso, 18th December, 1821. The rules and regulations were printed

at the *Courier* Office, Inverness, by John Johnstone & Co., and published in 1823. They make 14 small octavo pages, consisting of an introduction, 19 articles, list of the committee, and a certificate by Robert Rose, clerk of the peace, dated Thurso, 7th November, 1822, that the rules and regulations were confirmed by the justices of the peace of the county that day, and a duplicate of them in parchment deposited in his office according to act of parliament. The introduction explains the advantage of benefit societies for sickness, distress, and old age, for relief of widows and children, and for burial. On admission of members is the first article, all Gunns under forty years of age in good employment, with healthy wives, and a few up to fifty, until 100 members enrol, being admissible. Rebels, swearers, thieves, and Sabbath-breakers are rigidly excluded. Second, Meetings: The annual at Thurso on last Tuesday of June, and quarterlies the same day of September, December, and March, all at noon. Third, Election of Office-bearers: A yearly poll, and if the president or treasurer refuse to serve, the fine is 3s.; if the stewards, managers, or keymaster, 2s. Fourth, Business of the President and Treasurer. Fifth, Business of Committee: visiting the sick and paying their allowances. Sixth, Admission Fees: the first two years, entry money to those under 25 years 5s., to 35 years 7s. 6d., to 40 years 10s., with power to change thereafter. Seventh, Chest and Treasurer: the box for bills, books, etc., to have two keys, one for the keymaster and the other for the president, the treasurer to find caution for what is entrusted to him. Eighth, Quarterly Payments: each member 1s. 6d., with fines for delay. Ninth, Application of Funds: a member seven years, his allowance £4 and wife's £2 10s. funeral expenses; less than that time, £3 and £2. Any member re-marrying must pay each time £1, refusal limiting to the burial of only one wife. If a member aged 50 marry a woman under 35, she shall not benefit after his death, except her funeral expenses, unless he has paid seven years after their nuptials. If a member die before seven years, his widow pays his quarterlies till that time, so as to benefit to 15s. quarterly while continuing a widow and behaving in

a decent and modest manner. Orphans are to be aided till the age of twelve. Tenth, Sick Allowance: member of seven years 4s. weekly for 12 weeks, 3s. for next 12, and thereafter, if ill, superannuated on what can be afforded, feigners to be expelled as impostors. Eleventh, Sick Money Applications: no member within ten miles of Thurso due two quarters can receive aid, and none beyond who is due four. Twelfth, Office-bearers' Fines: the president and treasurer for absence 6d., the others 4d., members from the annual meeting 1s., and leaving a meeting without permission from the president 6d. Thirteenth, Purging the Roll: all within 50 miles of Thurso behind four quarters to be struck off, and beyond that when eight quarters are due. Fourteenth, the Box not to be shut: if the funds are less than £100, quarterlies to be increased, and allowances not to be stopped. Fifteenth, Funds: to be put in bank or invested. Sixteenth, Arbitration: aggrieved member can choose one arbiter, the Society another with power to add a third, the arbitration to be accepted on a previously signed obligation. Seventeenth, Dissolution: only by five-sixths of the members. Eighteenth, every member of the Society to appear on the yearly meeting in a coat of tartan belonging to the clan under a fine of 1s. Nineteenth, Conclusion: members to approve of the articles, but may alter with approbation of the justices of the peace, the committee to subscribe.

President, John Gunn, merchant in Swiney; treasurer, Alexander Gunn, merchant in Thurso; keymaster, Alexander Gunn in Osculay; stewards, Donald Gunn, farmer in Breahour; George Gunn, innkeeper in Thurso; William Gunn, farmer in Knockglass; John Gunn, messenger in Dunbeath; managers, Alexander Gunn, shoemaker in Buolkork; James Gunn, messenger in Thurso; Peter Gunn in Swiney; Robert Gunn, farmer in Olgrimbeg; clerk and secretary, John Gunn, Thurso.

On the blank back of the title-page is written, "No. I., George Gunn, Esq., Assynt, enrolled a member, 18th December, 1821, JOHN GUNN, *Preses.*"

#### THE CHIEFTAINCY.

If it must be finally accepted, on the legal and state evidence now

produced, that George Gunn, factor, Rhives, was the true representative of the M'Hamishes of Kildonan valley, it does not necessarily follow that he was the chief of all the Gunns, even though thus proved the head of the eldest branch of the ruling house. A clan was not like an entailed estate, going inevitably to eldest sons. On the contrary, when the clan system was alive, and not dead as now, an uncle or other adult relative was made chief if the last chief's son were a minor, or even deficient in physical powers and mental activity. By the hereditary principles of modern civilisation, however, the general representation of the Gunns did lie with Hector served chief in 1803, and George in 1814, as descended from the coroner of Caithness's eldest son James. This modified view of the position ought to assuage the bitterness which on slight occasion floods the chieftaincy question. Sir Robert Gordon, who lived when the Gunns had more of the character of a Celtic clan than at any other time, absolutely writes of John Gunn, *alias* Robson, as "chieftain of the clan Gunn in Caithness," again and again. At no time did the Gunns reach unity of organisation, except momentarily at the battle of Aldgown in 1586, when their rival superiors, the earls of Sutherland and Caithness, combined for their extermination. In that brave defence of their doomed lives it is probable the McHamish had the single appearance in all Gunn history of being absolute chief. It is certain he had it only for that turn, because nothing is clearer than that to suit the political purposes of the Gordons, Sinclairs, and Mackays, the clan Gunn were kept in a constant state of intestine and frequently sanguinary division. The theory of three chiefs, the Bregaul Gunns also having theirs, is hardly visionary; the Hendersons and Williamsons of the Gunn lineage also claiming independence from anything like McHamish rule.

None the less were the McHamish representatives the most lordly of the clan; and that this Kildonan eldest branch is said to have a living chief in the nephew of Captain Gunn, Braehour, increases the interest. Hector Gunn, Thurso, who was married to Janet, daughter of Robert Mackay, Clibrig, died in 1803, the year of his being returned heir of the chieftaincy,



His son George, Lieutenant of the Royal Navy, factor for the Duke of Sutherland, married Margaret, a daughter of Macdonald of Skeabost or Kingsborough, Skye, and was served heir in 1814. He died in 1859. His eldest son was Donald, a factor in Cornwall, who died without issue in 1863, chieftain four years. An only brother, Hector of the unfortunate Agra Bank, succeeded him, but he also died without issue in 1874. These two McHamishes do not seem to have taken the trouble and expense of serving themselves heirs. By one of the genealogical trees, which are always to be suspected till thoroughly established by legal inquisition, Captain Gunn traces his nephew back to a second son of John of Kinbrace, Alexander Gunn, Dalnaglaton, who died in 1765. His son John, Braehour, died in 1810. Donald, Braehour and Brawlbin, who died in 1861, was John's son and successor. Donald's eldest son was John in Durness, whose son Alexander is chieftain of the clan Gunn. Alexander's heirship goes back to the same McHamish as that of Hector Gunn, Thurso, did in 1803; the latter's *abavus* or great-great grandfather, their common ancestor. "Hector Gunn, Thurso, and my grandfather," Captain Gunn says, "were first cousins;" their fathers, George of Knockfinn, and Alexander, Dalnaglaton, being brothers, the sons of John of Kinbrace, son of George of Borrobol, second son of Alexander of Killernan and Navidale in the middle of the 17th century, the above McHamish. If Alexander in Durness can back this genealogy with legal evidence from parish registers, public and private documents, or other sound sources, he is the McHamish of the time. Captain Gunn's accuracy, love of antiquities, and lineage enthusiasm give every hope that he could enable Alexander to establish his position before the most exacting and searching legal tribunals. Till this be done it is impossible to accept on his assertion, however detailed and probable, what may be only the tree mania which has attacked so many of the gallant Gunns. His interest in his ancestors has always been keenly intelligent, and a suggestive proof of the fact is that he possesses now a bed of George in Corrish's eldest brother Alexander, the McHamish who acted

so picturesquely and vigorously in 1736 about the forgery bill. "It is the only relic belonging to that family, except a cannon ball of 42 lbs. weight, which was sent to Killernan more than two centuries ago by one of the McHamishes' sons, from Flanders, where he was an officer of artillery. The ball, by the marks upon it, is supposed to have done hard service." Alexander in Durness is the son of John, who died in 1886 there, himself also the McHamish, if the claim which his younger brother, Captain Gunn, born in 1814, now advances, can be legally proved. But there was and is much opposition to all the claims upon the chieftaincy.

Some have believed, or pretended to believe, that the descendants of George in Corrish, brother of Alexander, the McHamish who died in 1763, aged 58, exist now numerous, and that among them the hereditary chief is to be found. The captain says this is false, "because in 1803 Hector Gunn, Thurso, was the nearest heir to Alexander Gunn or McHamish, the grandfather of George in Corrish, which could not be the case had any of George's family existed at that time." The witnesses of the Thurso inquisition of 1803 might quite well have been the adult contemporaries of George in Corrish. Bailie Paterson was then 77, and able to remember the so-called forgery case of 1736, being 10. The deponents of proof were probably older than he. From the age of the elder brother, the McHamish above, George could not be 30 in 1736; so that he may have lived many years during Bailie Paterson's manhood. The comparatively short time to cover with evidence makes the case one of absolute surety. If George had legitimate family living in 1803, they must have been well known to the witnesses, being of the very same generation and locality with themselves. It may be put as the barest of possibilities that the forgery could have legally disqualified them from heirship, had there been Corrish representatives. But if the criminal point were established, in itself and its results, of which there is little likelihood, Hector Gunn would still be the chief according to law. The overwhelming inference of sworn evidence is that he was so by eldest male hereditary descent. In a genealogical tree by

Captain Gunn, George in Corrish's only son William was drowned at sea, unmarried. On all reasonable grounds of discussion, this can be the last word as to the claim.

There is, however, another, and perhaps more serious, attack upon the right of Hector Gunn and his heirs to assume the chieftaincy of all the Gunns; and if Alexander, Durness, be the nearest living male heir to Hector and his descendants, and therefore the McHamish, he is directly concerned. On 21st May, 1890, Captain Gunn published the following letter on the subject :—

“The Rev. Alexander Auld, F.C. minister of Olrig, makes a statement in his book, ‘Ministers and Men of the Far North,’ 1868, regarding his near relative John Gunn, Hastigrow, to the effect that one section of the clan Gunn claimed for him the honour of being their chief, and that the matter was formally discussed at a meeting in Thurso, when it was adjudged to a rival. He further says that this John Gunn was descended from Donald Gunn of Braemore, who on his deathbed called his sons around him, and declared to them his last will and testament thus :—‘I bequeath Braemore to you. I gained it by the sword, and if you cannot retain it by the same title, you deserve to lose it.’ Seeing that Mr Auld is well versed in the history of the chieftaincy of the clan, it is expected that he will kindly inform the clan who was the rival and to whom the honour of the chieftaincy was adjudged at that time.”

The challenge was answered privately by the Rev. Alexander Auld, in the statement that the successful rival was Hector Gunn, Thurso, whose service as heir in 1803 is now established. In the light of this, it is curious to find Henderson, who is usually so accurate, on page 321 of his “Notes,” writing that “in 1664 John Gunn appears to have been in possession of Braemore, under the peaceful title of a written lease from the Earl of Caithness, at a rent of £490 Scots. It is said that a section of the clan claimed the chieftainship for this John, but that, on a formal discussion of the question at a meeting in Thurso, the honour was adjudged to a rival candidate.” John Gunn of Braemore died, by the “Services of Heirs,” in 1706, almost a century before the Thurso decision. His son George was the last of the Braemores in the eldest male line, and he died about 1735.

John, Hastigrew, was the next heir-male of a cadet branch, and it was on this footing that he claimed in 1803 to be at least "the chief of the Gunns in Caithness." His living representative is the Rev. Alexander Gunn, Watten, whose genealogical and historical learning amply equip him for the vindication of what rights he may have in the connection. It is said that he totally denies the legitimacy of the chieftainship of Hector, Thurso, as against the claim of his grandfather John in Hastigrew. The strongest recent statement of the position is by "Octogenarian" as follows:—"The male line of McHamish, the chief of the clan Gunn of Sutherlandshire, is extinct. The Caithness chief of the clan Gunn is the Rev. Alexander Gunn (Robson)." This wholesale assertion, of course, makes the clergyman chief of all the Gunns; but the assertor, if picturesque in his narrations, is often wild in his historical consecutions. The valley of Kildonan might be said to have been populated by the descendants of the McHamishes; and as there are many Gunns still in Sutherland, the theory of extinction cannot hold water. That the Rev. Alexander is the sub-chief or even the independent chief of Caithness, is a much more reasonable thesis for argument. Something may be gathered about his ancestors from the same source thus:—

"The sons of John Gunn (Robson) left Braemore and bought the low end of Forss, in the parish of Thurso, where the river of Forss falls into the sea. This place, now called Port-na-cross, is very beautiful, with rich soil for all kinds of common crop. It is also well sheltered and faces the sun. The great glen comes down from the cataract of the river, which winds through the glen, and is full of salmon and trout. These Gunns went under the name of the 'big Gunns of Port-na-cross.' Such models of men are not seen now—long in the body, broad in the shoulder, round breast, with short legs, and short-necked. They were said to be as strong as Oscar, brave as Goile, and as fearless as Cuchullin. They were in Forss for many generations. They were generous to all comers—the door always open and the table spread and food free. They had ale of their own making, and drank their own whisky. The price of whisky was only two shillings the gallon. One of these Gunns earned great renown by his chivalrous conduct at the taking of the rock of Gibraltar in 1704. Big Donald Gunn was noted as a swordsman—perhaps the best in Scotland at the time. It was Donald who trained Captain Innes of Sandside in sword

exercise before he fought the duel with Sinclair of Orlig at Tongside, above Halkirk. He was at Innes's side that day, and requested the captain to play the six figure of his sword before Orlig, who was killed on the spot. Some time after this, the Gunns sold the low end of Forss to the Sinclairs of Forss. Most of the Gunns went to America. Big Donald Gunn became tacksman of the farm of Hestigrow, in the parish of Bower. His sons were Alexander Gunn, the late eminent minister of Watten, and brave Captain Gunn, late of Scouthal. There is a tomb or vault belonging to these Gunns in St Mary's Chapel, Crosskirk. The tablet fixed in the wall bears an inscription:—"This motive stone is put here by me, Donald Gunn, son of the late deceased Alexander Gunn, being resident in Forss, and his forefathers before him of an old date lived in the foresaid place, whose dust lies here. He signed his name with John Gunn and Alexander Gunn, George Gunn and James Gunn. 1778."

In another published letter, "Octogenarian" makes these Forss, Crosskirk, or Lybster Gunns to be the descendants of John Gunn (Robson) who figured in the affair of the Sandside arson in 1615, and who died at Westgarty, Sutherland, in 1618. As has been noticed, there is information in the *Origines Parochiales* that Robert John Gunn (Robson), or perhaps Robert and John Gunn (Robson), held Lybster, &c., in 1624, the brother or brothers of the baron of Austria, Sir William Gunn. A critic has said that it is "very questionable if ever the lands of Forss were bought free by any of the Gunns, although they dwelt there as tacksmen." It is clear that they inherited, through their mother, the occupancy of parts of Lybster, Borrowston, and the fishing; proprietorship not then known as now understood, rights over lands being three and four-fold often, up to the church and the crown, these only having a kind of partnership power. It was through this Robert of the Braemore family that John in Hastigrew opposed Hector Gunn, Thurso, in 1803, and that the Rev. Alexander Gunn, Watten, son of Rev. Alexander, Watten, who died in 1836, has been put forward not only as chief of the clan Gunn in Caithness but of all the Gunns. He was inducted as successor to his father in the parish church of Watten, on 6th April, 1837, Rev. Finlay Cook, Reay, preaching the sermon. Among others present was Rev. Robert Innes Gunn, Keiss, brother of the author of the MS. history of this appendix. Another critic

of "Octogenarian" says that Big Donald Gunn was not the present Rev. Alexander's grandfather, but John in Hestigrew, the son of Alexander, "the scholar," Gillock, who was the son of Big Donald. This was a miss of two members of descent, and almost within living memory. The difficulty of completing a pedigree back to Robert Gunn (Robson) of 1624 can be imagined, from such a slip; but it is well known that the Rev. Alexander himself has documentary and historical facts of varied character, by which he might possibly accomplish the feat of at least proving himself chief of the Gunns in Caithness.

The claim of the Bregaul or Cattaig Gunns to be chiefs was founded by assertion and on occasion by the strong hand rather than legally. Teutonic individuality in the Gunns, made it always difficult for them to submit to mastery after the Celtic clan manner. If it could be fully credited, the following by "Octogenarian" ought to settle their aspiration towards the chieftaincy:—

"John Gunn (Robson) had a son by Miss Sutherland, daughter of the laird of Langwell, and another son by his wife, both sons being the same age. Miss Sutherland sent her son to John Gunn (Robson), and both sons were fostered by his wife. When they were fifteen years of age, they went out to hunt with bow and arrow, and killed a roebuck between Cath-na-scauil and Corrioich Clach, at a large stone. This stone is called 'the buck stone' to this day. The legitimate son said to his brother, 'You must take the buck home on your back, because I am better than you.' His brother replied, 'You are not better than I. My mother is as good as your mother, and we have the same father.' The buck was left at the big stone, and both lads gave in their complaint to their father. He said to his illegitimate son, 'You are all right, my son; your mother is as good as his mother, and you have the same father. I see that some jealousy is rising against you here; but I will send you to my friend at Tacher to be brought up for the future, and I will give you a competent portion of my money and stock, though I cannot bestow upon you *dos clog, aid na Suaicheantais an Fhine*, or the crest and motto of the clan.' The son who was sent to Tacher was the ancestor of the late Gunns of Dalmore and Cattaig."

Of this there was some rather severe criticism:—

"It was Donald and not a John who was connected with the tradition to which "Octogenarian" refers. It was not a daughter of the laird of Langwell

who was named in connection with the affair, but a wife, and Donald killed the husband in order to get her. Further, Donald had more sons than one, and the lad who disputed with them at the "buck-stone" was a son of Sutherland's who had been brought to Braemore along with his mother. Besides, it was said that young Sutherland had the best of the fight. Sutherland, who is said to have been killed by Donald, was known as Eachainn-na-Pallaig."

The usual descent of the Bregaul, Cattaig, or Dalmore branch is from John, the third son of the coroner; and even on this orthodox basis they could not be the chiefs till the Killernan and Braemore families were extinct. If the bar sinister was on their shield, it would increase to some extent the difficulty of securing the coveted distinction. But these traditions, or their corrections, cannot be taken seriously. "The descendants of the illegitimate son were called the Reddishness Gunns. That name follows them to this day in Caithness." To show how traditions vary, it is Robert, tacksman of Braemore, who is said by Forsyth, in his "Beauties of Scotland," to have been the hero of the love story. See within, page 34.

Compared with all these vague wanderings in the obscure past, the Brachour parchments and papers are as the light of day; and it is no disparagement of the rights of other members of the clan to say that the chieftaincy is clearly the hereditary right of Lieutenant George Gunn's nearest male heir, if such a person exists. It is for him to prove legally his descent, that he may be returned heir, in the feudal rather than perhaps the clan manner, just as Hector, Thurso, and his son, the above George, were, two previous McHamishes of the later entailing period. William in Durness would, in this event, be about as much the chief of the clan Gunn as Lord Reay now is of the Mackays. Among the latter there were the sub-chiefs of the Abrachs, Macphails, etc.; and the Rev. Alexander Gunn, should it be shown that the McHamishes are not extinct, might claim and prove such distinction, if not indeed greater degree of equality with the McHamish, from the peculiar rivalry history of Sutherland, Strathnaver, and Caithness.

The latest statement, by "Thurso," appears antiquated and uninstructed

in the face of the Braehour parchments and papers; but it is useful to have extreme views brought into open day, as they often answer themselves, and thus more firmly establish the truth :—

“According to the best authorities, dead and living—such as Rev. Alex. Sage, Kildonan; Rev. Donald Sage, Resolis; and Rev. Alex. Gunn, Watten—Hector Gunn, Thurso, must be regarded as a usurper, and those who gave evidence in his favour were biased and imposed upon. It is well known that the Rev. Alex. Sage of Kildonan wrote an historical sketch of the clan Gunn, and made their history a special study. He was also personally acquainted with the generations immediately succeeding the last McHamish, as well as all their traditions, and he has adjudged the chieftaincy to George Gunn, Corrish, second son of Donald of Killernan and Badinloch. The celebrated author of *Memorabilia Domestica*, Rev. Donald Sage, in his book says, page 281, referring to the chieftaincy of the clan Gunn—‘David Gunn’ [a descendant of the above George of Corrish], ‘however, never laid claim to the honours. He was an eminently pious man, and left the honours to be usurped by Hector Gunn at Thurso.’ But the greatest living authority, according to the best critics, as regards the genealogy and history of the above clan, is the genial and learned Free Church minister of Watten. His ‘genealogical tree’ is a work of great ability and talent, if not genius, and is the best solution of the question.”

A written version, by the minister of Watten, is that about the beginning of this century the chieftainship was claimed by Lieutenant George Gunn, R.N., factor for the Duke of Sutherland, when it fell to the collateral branches. Certain formalities were gone through by his father, Hector Gunn, merchant, Thurso, based mostly or entirely on his own disposition to establish the claim. It passed without opposition, as no one thought it worth while to object; but the men of the clan never acknowledged the claim. Now that the genealogy of the clan is better known, it is manifestly absurd.

The vagueness of such treatment of the case needs no showing beyond reference to the Braehour documents. The list of the honourable and learned men of the Thurso inquisition of 1803, answers all cavils as to the good faith of the decision in favour of Hector; and so far from there being no opposition, the greatest living authority's own grandfather, John in



Hestigrow, did what he could, then and there, to secure the chieftaincy for himself. To say, as "Thurso" docs, that the legal inquisition was an affair of bias, imposition, and usurpation, would be the repudiation of all lawful action, even by the most carefully selected body of individuals. He would make short work of the decisions of ordinary juries, thought to be the bulwark of justice, if he is to treat lightly and of no account, or of vicious account, the sentence of so large and important a committee of inquiry. That the clan never acknowledged Lieutenant George Gunn, R.N., as the McHamish and chieftain, is contradicted by the documents given in connection with the institution of the Gunn Society at Thurso on 18th December, 1821, and especially by the letter of Lieutenant John Gunn, Swiney. Hector Gunn's formalities may or may not have been based mostly or entirely on his own desire to attain the chieftaincy; but his rival, John Gunn, tacksman of Hestigrow, if the story which follows be true, was evidently an adept in doubtful policy:—

"A worthy man told a notable instance of John's shrewdness in the case of two of his neighbours who had disputed. The matter was brought before the sheriff court. John Gunn was summoned as a witness, and he knew he would offend one of them if he gave evidence. Accordingly, when asked to hold up his right hand, he said, 'I would like to know what for?' He was told he must give his oath. He asked, 'What is that?' The oath being repeated, he said, 'Is it so particular that one could not lean a little?' The presiding judge said, 'That man does not know the nature of an oath.' In this manner he succeeded in retaining the friendship of his neighbours, one or other of whom might have been a thorn in his side."

At the Thurso inquisition he came out second best, and it may be left to the evidence now public whether justly or unjustly. The question of George in Corrish and his descendants, if any, needs respectful handling, because of the theories of the Sages. Should legal records be discovered yet, showing that George was a convict in 1736, they might reconcile the findings of the Sages and of the distinguished men who composed the inquisition at Thurso in 1803. It has already been pointed out that

George's descendants, so often mentioned in a vague way, must have been all illegitimate, except the unmarried son who was drowned at sea. George's disputing with his wife Polson about the bill may have been permanent, and he was then quite a young man. But, in any case, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he and his had no legal claim in 1803, as against Hector Gunn; the documents of proof being formal, regular, national, and executed at the best time for decision, certainly at a much better epoch than now.

It is said that Alexander Gunn, Durness, clever, handsome, and well-to-do, has not asserted his rights as the real living McHamish, and chief of the clan, because he is only a subordinate official of the Duke of Sutherland. As ground-officer in his district, his modesty forbids him to assume the headship; but if fortune should further favour him, he would push to be returned heir to Factor Gunn's son, the last McHamish. Such diffidence is wholly unnecessary; for in the palmy days of the clan system it was the glory of a chief to have no property in land or goods, these belonging to the whole clan, who contributed to the sustentation of their leader, as Free Church and other congregations do now to that of their ministers. The chivalry of Celtic society lay precisely in this fact; and any modern Gunn who would object to his chief on the ground of not drawing thousands a year from land or from stocks or other investments, is out of court, as an ignorant and a Philistine.

More promising credentials than Alexander's it would be difficult to desire. His uncle, Captain Gunn, Braehour, now seventy-six, is admitted to be, if not the greatest, at least a genuine, living authority on Gunn questions; and he is thoroughly assured of his nephew's being the rightful McHamish and chieftain. It were strange if the captain had not been well posted up in all historic points, seeing that his father, Donald Gunn, Braehour, was the acknowledged sennachy or historian of his time, and that from him he has derived most of his traditional and other knowledge. So much had the Braehours been accepted, that Factor Gunn's son, the last

McHamish, before his death, sent to Captain Gunn, as one of his nearest relatives, all the papers on the subject which he possessed, a few of which have appeared in this appendix. It is worth adding that as Donald Gunn's mother was May, a daughter of Dunbar of Hempriggs, he had thus interest and insight with respect to the ruling families as well as the Gunns, of which he took full advantage as an unusually learned sennachy. Since it is to be hoped that the pedigree of Alexander in Durness will soon be submitted to public legal decision, it is unnecessary to state here the ample collateral details which exist, the persons of the main succession having been given. That there is no fear of failure of heirs to the chieftaincy in this branch may be gathered from the fact that the Hon. Donald Gunn, Manitoba, Canada, Captain Gunn's first cousin, and Alexander in Durness's, once removed, has himself seven or eight sons; and there are others, in Australia and elsewhere, of similar condition.

#### ENGLISH AND OTHER GUNNS.

In the state records of both England and Scotland, when Edward the First was engaged in the subjugation of the Scotch, a Sir Ingram de Gynes frequently appears; and Mackay in his "History" assumes him to have been a Gunn. He was a principal warrior on the English side, and had lands in both countries. What makes for the view of him being of the clan, is that another of the same name appears in 1365 signing a Scotch state charter under the great seal, next to Reginald le Cheyne, the Caithnessman. But, on the whole, the evidence cannot bear out this interesting theory. It is from the county of Norfolk that he is summoned in 1298 by Edward to bring his men for the Scottish wars; and though Scotchmen had estates in England and Englishmen in Scotland, to an extent in early history not now at all appreciated, it would be risking too much to say that Sir Ingram of Norfolk was a Gunn. The spelling Gynes suggests a French local surname, though it might be Geanzies in Ross-shire, which may be equivalent to "Gunn's," meaning Gunn's property. The whole subject is

too dark, though it is curious that all the genealogical trees have one Sir Ingram de Gunn about the beginning of the 14th century. Though sceptical generally on these points, the following quotation may be allowed to raise the question if Sir Ingram de Gynes of Norfolkshire, Berwickshire, &c., has left English descendants in his special county :—

“Mr. John Gunn, of Norwich, whose death occurred in that city on 28th May, 1890, should have record of his labours in geology and archæology. The son of the rector of Irstead and Barton, he succeeded to that living in 1841, but after forty years of clerical duty resigned his position for conscience' sake. In early life he took great interest in the archæology of Norfolk, especially in ecclesiastical architecture; but subsequently his attention was given mainly to geology, and he became an enthusiastic collector. His fine collection of local fossils, specially rich in relics of the ‘Forest bed,’ he presented to the Norwich Museum. Mr. Gunn at the time of his death was in his eighty-ninth year.”—*Athenæum*.

That this clerical family was not recently, if at all, from Scotland, might be inferred from their armorial bearings, Gules, three lions rampant, proper, on an escutcheon of ermine, on a bend azure, three escallops argent, within a bordure or; their crest a lion rampant, holding a bezant. Matthew Gunn gave evidence to the committee of the House of Commons on the English bill of attainder with reference to Ireland, leave to bring it in being given on 20th June, 1689; but to which of the three kingdoms he belonged does not appear. See pages 97 and 98 within for a Richard and a William of similar indefinite account.

There is a Gunn coat-of-arms as follows :—Gules, two muskets in saltire, within a bordure argent, a chief or, charged with a lion passant, guard of the field; with crest, a dexter hand holding a musket proper; and motto, *Vel pax vel bellum*, “Even peace or war.” It is evidently that of Gunns of Scotch origin wherever they may have resided. To the Caithness Gunns is some times given a motto, *Caute et sedule*, “Cautiously and diligently.” The Gunn-Munroes of Poyntzfield, Cromartysire, have the second quarter of their shield for Gunn, Argent, a three-masted ship in the sea, proper, flagged, gules, on a chief of the last, three legs in armour, conjoined

at the thigh and flexed in triangle, proper, between two mullets. The interest of this lies in its claim for the Gunns to the Isle of Man. A Gunn-Cunningham family in Ireland has arms (exemplified to George Gunn, Riverside, Kerry, 15th May, 1826), of which the second and third quarters are for Gunn, Azure, a chevron ermine, between three cannons, two and one. Both these last-mentioned names have contemporary representatives in Walford's "County Families" of 1890, as well as the Gunns of Rattoo. Mrs. Gunn, relict of the Donald Gunn of Latheron who died in 1869, is also mentioned. Half-a-dozen Gwyns of Wales appear in the above repository, who are said to be of the same stock as the Scottish Gunns, the Welsh "w" being the equivalent of the English "u." On this ground the beautiful and accomplished actress Nell Gwynne, mistress of Charles II., becomes one of the clan. It is said that there was some time ago, certainly not now, a Sir George Gwyn of Gwyn Castle, Whitland, Pembrokeshire, South Wales; and that the family sported a tartan similar to that of the Gunns of North Scotland. These relationships, however, may be more romantic than real, though their mention may be an incentive to further research. Under the present heading appropriate reference may be made to Gunn, the Nottinghamshire cricketer, who in physical proportions and batting fame stands next to Grace, the champion.

#### SOME ANTIQUITIES.

In Strathmore, at Tollachan, a standing-stone or monolith has been the cause of chequered speculation. The view of one speculator will be gathered from this passage:—

"In the course of time John Gunn (Robson) died at Braemore, and had the honourable burial due to a chief. His remains were rolled in a deer skin, probably dressed for the purpose. There was no coffin. A great feast was prepared for the men, because the journey was long to Spittal, through the hills by way of Scorriclett, Strathmore. His armour-bearer carried a white banner before the bier, and the late chief's piper played some pibrochs and the lament of the coroner, 'Weighty, weighty, weighty blow of the Gunns to the Keiths. Revenge, revenge, revenge the blood of the coroner.' At a place above Tolachan, Strath-

more, his brother and his men from Strathy joined the procession. He had this place free. He ordered the remains to be lowered to the ground, and he opened the deer-skin above the face and said, 'Who would say that death is not strong when he killed Little John, my brother?' At this place, on the side of the hill, a red slab of freestone was erected. There was engraved on the stone a double cross. This stone, named *Cluch-na-Caplich*, or the 'mournful memory stone,' stands in the same place to this day. At this time, St. Peter's Church at Spittal was a sanctuary of protection to men pursued by the blood revenger."

A rather severe critic of the above says :—

"Substituting the name Donald for John, the story of the funeral is fairly correct. The detection of the double cross on the stone above Tolachan is due to the indefatigable efforts of Captain Gunn, Braehour, who, after finding the stone covered with moss and apparently obliterated, carefully washed and cleaned it with the zeal of a genuine antiquarian, and afterwards traced it in company with an expert in such things."

Still more of interesting though mixed detail is given in another reference to the monolith :—

"Regarding the stone at Tolachan, it originally stood five feet in height. Forty years ago a Donald Gunn, residing in Snitud, came to the stone with a hammer and knocked two feet off it. The hieroglyphics were safe. Afterwards Captain Gunn, Braehour, sent a letter to William Gunn, Scorietlett, to go and take the stone down and cover it with turf, and this request was complied with the following day. Two weeks thereafter Captain Gunn and one of the sappers and miners went up to examine the stone, and rebuilt it in the old place. The stone was never covered with fog, the elements of nature having kept it clean. There is something associated with the stone of the religion of the Druids. The hieroglyphic side faced the sun, and the four angles of crosses answer exactly to the four points of the compass."

Æneas Gunn in his MS. has recounted the tale, and has also made the stone a memorial of the halt; but it was there many centuries before the brothers were in existence; though it may have been a kind of rainbow after the flood. Whether monoliths are Druidic or Norse is another by no means settled question. They are even claimed for the wicked Canaanites, or, in less libellous language, the merchant-trading Phoenicians, long before the Christian era. That such stones were often the chimney-backs of barbarian turf cottages, from which time had swept and washed

down the materials, is a realistic theory; the carving executed at later periods on the most natural suggestions of suitability. But as to such conclusions each patient must minister unto himself.

The latest antiquarian investigation by Captain Gunn is full of pertinence, namely, a search for facts about the earliest castles or holds of the lineage. Of Castle Gunn, East Clyth, not a vestige appears to the ordinary eye. It is situated on a rock detached from the land, with the sea all round except at one place, where there is a beach that is always dry. The only masonry which first drew his attention was the remains of the walls of a house about 24 feet by 14 feet. As this trifling building could not be called a castle, the thought arose to the enthusiastic antiquarian that the word had its origin from another cause. With the spade there was successful tracing of foundation stones for a length of 51 feet. The large building which this represents, the veritable Castle Gunn, has fallen into a neighbouring hollow, filling it to the level of the rock-site. The surface of the ruins is smooth, the stones, from one to three inches thick, by overlapping each other, giving the appearance of natural rock, and thus obscuring the facts. Rubbish and smaller stones have run down at the south corner of the castle. For centuries nothing was known of the castle except the name, but this was sufficient motive for a search which has proved as successful as it is historically valuable. Foundations laid at least five or six hundred years ago are now authenticated; and it would not require much reconstructive imagination to picture out the full details of what was one of the earliest strongholds of the Gunns in Caithness.

Haberry Castle, which was the residence of George the coroner, is at Mid Clyth, on a neck of land jutting into the sea. The isthmus has a trench across it, cut in the solid rock, 150 feet long, 18 feet broad, and from 9 to 12 feet deep. Over this was the drawbridge, with external and internal guard-houses. No castle exists, but the marks of three buildings can be discerned, and there are indications of other constructions.

John Tulloch, Thrumster, has written that the Gunns had a castle at

Ulbster, which was cleared off to the foundation by the Sinclairs after they became the proprietors. The descendants of William Gunn, the coroner's son, had the lands of Ulbster, says Captaiu Gunn, down to the time the Sinclairs acquired it about 1640. In 1614 James Williamson or Johnson was served heir to his father, James Johnson, the ancestors of the Williamsons of Banniskirk, who, with the Hendersons of Stemster and Rosebank, have been, as lairds, the most important modern members of the Gunn lineage. The Ulbsters themselves say that there is an assignation dated 3rd May, 1591, by William Graham in Ulbster, at the desire of George, fifth earl of Caithness, in favour of the said noble lord's cousin, Patrick Sinclair; and that there is also a disposition of 6th March, 1603, by Earl George to Patrick of certain lands in Ulbster. James Oliphant assigned 28th May, 1607, some land there to Patrick. A charter of confirmation under the great seal was given to Patrick's brother, Mr. John, of the sixpenny land of Ulbster on 6th June, 1616, on a previous charter by Earl George, where it is said that Ulbster formerly belonged to George Keith, earl-marshal (Lord Keith and Altyre); to William, Lord Keith, his son; and to Laurence, Lord Oliphant; "by us lately acquired from them, and by the said Mr. John Sinclair acquired hereditarily from their tenants and vassals, as also from us." Earl George's charter is dated Castle Sinclair, 29th December, 1615. These facts may not conflict with the possession of Ulbster by the Gunns, at all events in earlier periods; but they give the impression of many holders, superior and under, coming between the coroner's descendants and the first Sinclair Ulbsters.

To return to the captain's antiquarian researches, "There is a place at Strath Farm, Watten, called Coroner Gunn's Garden. Upon a rock at the river's edge there is a small fortalice, which he is supposed to have occupied while hunting. Some natural wood exists in the strath still, and there is no doubt that in the coroner's time it was plentiful." Henderson mentions the garden. He says that Andrew Williamson of Achornie was the first Banniskirk, of which place he had a feu-charter from George, sixth



earl of Caithness, in 1665. Andrew "is said to have fought at Altmarloch, on the side of the Sinclairs, and to have been killed there, and his body carried for burial to Spittal, where the Gunns (from whom the Williamsons are reported to be descended) had their burial-place."

In the heights of Strathmore, Halkirk, Captain Gunn says tradition points out a small piece of land as the first cultivated above Loch More. Bessie, a daughter of the coroner, was the pioneer; and Bessie's Slope still commemorates her. Where her byre stood is shown. The captain knows the site of the house of the father of Helen Gunn, the Caithness heroine; and he corrects the name of her captivated captor from Dugald to Andrew Keith; adding that she was taken to Dunbeath Castle first, and thence to Ackergill Tower. The late Sir George Dunbar, his relative, showed him the window she sprang from, which is a variation from the usual statement that it was from the top of the tower; and he can further indicate the exact spot where she is buried.

Alexander and Henry, sons of the coroner, had the estate of Dale, which included Mybster, Westerdale, Achipster, Achlibster, to the Glutt at the source of the Thurso river. See for proof the will of Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath, dated Roslin Castle, 15th November, 1456; one item of which is, "I leave to the coroner a horse." The coroner's daughter who married the Macdonald ancestor the Lord of the Isles, was previously the wife of Torquil Macleod of Lewis; and it is suggested that this accounts in some way for the name of Torquil Gunn, her brother, who died of his wounds after the fight with the Keiths at Strathmore. More important is the belief that Paul McTyre, Macintyre, or, as Pope spells it in Norse form, Mentier, was of Gunn blood; but to prove this may be as difficult as to show that Otta or Ottar who had lands in Navidale, probably Count Otto or Odo of Thurso, was the grandson of the first Gunn.

The captain's archæology is not more spirited than his history, of which this passage is at once for example and comparison to other versions of the event:—

"Paul Macintyre had right to get from Caithness yearly nine score kine, as long as he came for them personally. It happened at last that he was busy erecting and fortifying a castle at Creich, in Sutherland. He sent his son Gillespie and Murdo Rivach Mackenzie, an outlaw and brave warrior, with a strong party of men, to take up the custom cows; but the Caithnessians assembled at Spittal Hill, and put themselves under the command of Burb, afterwards Budge, of Toftingall. They took up their position at the south corner of the east end of Loch Watten, extending themselves to the steep banks of the river below Achingale. The banks protected their right flank as Loch Watten did their left, and moreover they had the advantage of the higher ground. Here they waited the approach of Gillespie and Murdo Rivach, who were driving a herd of cattle from the low lands. On arriving, the strangers made a furious attack on the centre of Burb's position, and succeeded, but only for a time, in pushing back the Caithnessmen. The fight was furious and the slain many. At last Gillespie and Murdo were overpowered by numbers, and both fell in the action. The remains of Gillespie were taken home, and there is a poem extant which relates that when crossing Holmsdale river, which was in flood, the force of the current carried away the corpse and those bearing it, and all were lost. Murdo Rivach's body was buried where he fell, and the mark of his grave is still to be seen. His head was being carried home, and while the company were passing the top of the Ord, the road then on the very edge of the cliffs, a fight took place between two of those bearing the head, and both, together with their ghastly burden, tumbled over the rocks, a hundred feet high, and were dashed to pieces. Murdo Rivach Mackenzie's two-handed sword remained in the possession of the Budes of Toftingall till the year 1688, when it was given to Kenneth Mackenzie of Seaforth."

The battle of Achingale would have a true place in Gunn history on condition of proving Paul McTyre to be of the stock, and it is known that Captain Gunn has intentions in that direction.

An introductory piece of ancient lore by him is full of promise, not only as to Paul Meutier's Teutonic descent, but with respect to a whole chapter of hitherto unknown Caithness history:—

"Paul Macintyre of Creich's wife was Mariota, daughter of Graham of Graham and niece of Hugh, earl of Ross, whose wife was sister of King Robert Bruce. William, son of this Hugh, was earl of Ross and Caithness; and his brother Hugh of Balnagown had the following lands in Caithness in 1361, namely, Harpsdale, Ackergill, and Freswick, which passed to Sheriff Mowat of Cromarty, the first landlord of that name in the county. Balnagown had a son Walter, who married Catherine, daughter of Paul, she being a second cousin,

and whose family afterwards succeeded to McTyre's whole property of Tutimtarvach, Fumack, Langwall in Strathoykel, and Gairloch."

On 5th April, 1366, William Builton (Sir Robert Gordon's surname to him), earl of Ross, gave a charter to Paul McTyre and his wife, Mary Graham in Argyle, of Gairloch and other lands; the charter confirmed under the great seal at Edinburgh by Robert II. in 1373. It was enforcing his rights on this basis in Caithness which caused the battle of Achingale, the date of which can thus be approximated. Magnus, earl of Orkney and Caithness, who signed the letter of 1320 to the pope, left daughters only, and these earldoms and their properties went to their husbands in a piecemeal way which brought Grahams, Builtons or Rosses, Leslies, Macdonalds, royal Stuarts, and others on the northern stage, beyond all power of clear discernment, till the Sinclair earls in 1455 began a steady succession, at all events in Caithness. The century from Earl Magnus to William Sinclair, earl of Orkney and Caithness, is full of interest to enterprising research; and if Paul McTyre of the fourteenth century, lord of Creich Castle, now one of the vitrified forts from the hardness of its building materials, can be attached lineally to Coroner Gunn of the fifteenth century, a great step will be made. See "An Ancient Charter," in the *Highland Monthly*, and also Sir Robert Gordon, pages 36 and 37, where "Paul-Mactire," is described as "a man of great power and possessions," and one "of whom many things are fabulously reported among the common people, which I omit to relate."

An antiquarian passage written by Cordiner in 1776, is of Gunn purpose:—

"Diriot Castle has a most remarkable situation. It is built upon the top of a steep circular rock, rising almost perpendicularly out of the banks of the Thurso and overhanging its craggy channel. There is on no side access to it but by climbing. Some steps seem to have been fashioned up the one side of the rock, but they are too ill executed to yield anything but a dangerous path. Opposite are several exceedingly picturesque and rugged cliffs, which bound the course of the river to a considerable distance on either hand. On the top of an

adjacent precipice is an enclosed burying-ground, with a number of moss-grown gravestones in it."

Of Cordiner's engraving of Dirlot Castle in his volume, it may be said that it is graphic, with water, irregular rocks, and the pyramidal island topped by a square bare tower whose walls were then about twelve feet. In the "Statistical Account of Scotland" there is mention of St. Columba's Chapel at Dirlot.

#### McHAMISH VII. AND HIS FAMILY.

Of Alexander Gunn *alias* McHamish, born 1705 and died 1763, and two of his sons "Octogenarian" has something :—

"In reference to Alasdair Mhor, the chief, here is a translation of a song composed by Donald Gunn the poet, formerly tacksman of Glengolly, near Thurso :—'I have met Alasdair Mhor Macsheumas Cattach in England selling his cattle. He asked me in a quiet manner. What do you need and require? He gave me a horse to take me home. He gave me that and five guineas, because he was the grandson of Domhnuill Dubhaill. You have a right to be brave.'"

"Donald Duagal," as is sometimes the spelling, means "Donald of much travail," and was the usual appellation of the first Lord Reay. The poem or its translation is wrong as to the degree of kin between these two chiefs of the Gunns and Mackays, Alexander being Donald's great-grandson. See the sasine of 1668 to Alexander's grandmother, Christina Mackay, daughter of Lord Reay, already given. Again :—

"Alastair Mhor, chief of the Clan Gunn, was resident at Badinloch. He was one of the celebrated and ancient stock who kept up the reputation of the chiefs in the Highlands. He had a piper, band, armour-bearer, an armoury and the fiery cross. When he built his new meal mill he put the whole machinery to work by whisky, and called it *muilliann a clabharr*. By his second marriage, Alastair Mhor had two sons and one daughter. The names of the sons were William and Morrison Gunn. They were fine models of men, with fair complexion, each of them standing in height six feet three inches. At the age of twenty they both entered the army on commission, went to India, and fell like heroes at Seringapatam."

By his first marriage this McHamish had a son Alexander, who died an officer in the army of Holland, without issue. In Aeneas Gunn's two pedigrees, no date is given for his death; but in the tree on page 120 within, he is said to have died in 1782, and to have been Colonel William, the McHamish. Taylor gives a William as the eighth McHamish, but that he was killed in action, a British officer in India. The explanation of the confusion must be that Colonel Alexander of the Dutch service, the eldest son, predeceased his father; and that after 1763 William of the second marriage was the McHamish till his death without issue in 1780. He was lieutenant of the 71st regiment, of which the colonel was General Fraser. A lieutenant's pay of the foot was then 4s. 8d. a day. In 1774 the regiment was invalided, but in 1779 was ordered to India. His younger brother Morrison was an ensign of the 1st or royal regiment of foot, which was for a long time then quartered at Gibraltar, where he died, and not at Seringapatam. His pay was 3s. 8d. a day. The circumstances of the death of his brother, Lieutenant William Gunn, the McHamish, in India, are not established; but the date of 1780, and the number of his regiment, make it almost certain that he was killed in the battle of Conjeveram, 40 miles from Madras, on 10th September of that year. Hyder Ali, the sultan of Mysore, and his son Tippoo, had left Seringapatam, their capital, in June, at the head of 28,000 cavalry and 55,000 infantry, burning and destroying till they reached the neighbourhood of Madras. The British commander-in-chief, Sir Hugh Munro, had 5,200 men, and his subordinate Colonel Baillie 2,800, to oppose the sudden invasion; but the leaders were widely apart, and Tippoo with his whole army prevented a junction. Munro detached 1,000 men under Colonel Fletcher to Baillie's aid; but 2,000 of the entire 3,800 were slain hopelessly and mercilessly in a gorge or valley, 200 European prisoners being carried to Seringapatam, most of them to die there of cruel treatment. Lieutenant Gunn was killed on that most fatal of Indian fields. Munro and Baillie were blamed for incapacity, Baillie it is said quite losing his presence of mind in the massacre rather than fight;

though great injustice was probably done to them both for want of success. The three subsequent sieges at different times of Seringapatam gave the British their revenge. Study of regimental and East Indian history might discover the exact facts of the eighth McHamish's decease, but these suggestions can only be at present offered. The battle is called by one historian "a heroic defence for many hours." William, the eighth McHamish, was destined never to see more his beautiful and then populous valley of Kildonan. In 1808, before the clearances, the parish had 286 houses and 1440 inhabitants; Helmsdale as a town having then no existence. The strath had at least as many inhabitants in William Gunn's time thirty years previously.

#### ITEMS FROM THE GORDONS.

On page 39 within there are points which may have aid from the explanation that the Coroner Gunn "was a great commander in Caithness in his time, and one of the greatest men in that country, because when he flourished there was no earl of Caithness, that earldom being still in the king's hands. It was thereafter given to William Sinclair, the second son of William, earl of Orkney, by his second wife, which William, earl of Caithness, was slain at Flodden." The information regarding the Sinclairs is wrong, the earldom of Caithness having been held by the Earl of Orkney before his son had it.

In 1529, "Andrew Stuart, bishop of Caithness, upon some conceived displeasure which he had received," says Sir Robert, "moved the clan Gunn to kill the laird of Duffus in the town of Thurso in Caithness." The incident, which has recently had fresh light thrown upon it, belongs most to the history of the Sutherlands of Duffus; the Gunns being, as was too often the case with them, merely the violent executive instruments of the designs of others. See "Bruce Caithness MSS."

At the defeat of Donald Mackay of Strathnaver beside Aldy ne Beth

in 1542, the McHamish of Killernan was one of the victorious pursuers on the Gordon side.

The battle of Garwary is quaintly described by Sir Robert, who says that the Mackays of Strathnaver, "the best and most resolute men," came in 1556, "spoiling and wasting the east corner of Sutherland. Their rage and fury went so far that they demolished and burnt St. Ninian's Chapel, in which was some time a place of refuge or sanctuary. But being upon their journey homeward, the inhabitants of Sutherland pursued them hotly under the conduct of McHamish (chieftain of the clan Gunn), the laird of Clyne, Terrell of the Doill, and James McWilliam, who died afterwards of grief at Earl John Gordon's death. They overtook the Strathnaver men at the foot of the hill called Ben More in Berriedale, and laying an ambush for them they invaded them beside the Water of Garwary, where they surprised them, having secretly passed their watch by reason of the foggy and misty weather. There ensued a cruel conflict, fought with great obstinacy. At last the Strathnaver men were overthrown and chased. Divers of them were slain, and many drowned in the Garwary. Others grievously wounded retained some remainder of life, which they expressed with sighs and groans as they were in the midst of the water. Many not mortally hurt were so overlain by their fellows in passing the river that they were unable to free themselves. The rest fled in confusion. The booty was rescued, and a memorable victory obtained by the inhabitants of Sutherland, John More Mackay himself hardly escaping with some few others." This affair was one of the brightest feathers in the caps of the McHamishes. See page 40 within.

Of "Alexander Gunn, the son of John Robson, chieftain of the clan Gunn, by Earl Adam Gordon's bastard daughter," who was apprehended at Delvines, Nairn, by Andrew Munro of Milton, and executed at Inverness by the Earl of Moray, Sir Robert says, he was "a very able and strong man, endowed with sundry good qualities, and he left only one bastard son behind him called Alexander Gunn."

In the Craigh-Lairn or "harrying of Latheron" by John Gordon of Golspitour, in February, 1589, with 200 men sent by the Earl of Sutherland, "they killed John James-sone (a principal gentleman of Caithness), with some others, and brought home a great prey of cattle." This James-sone was one of the McHamishes or Gunns, Jameson being the English naming.

Some of the clan Gregor were called Abrachs; so Gordon's explanation that a section of the Mackays were called Abrach from an ancestor marrying a Lochaber woman, does not appear to be a true theory.

Iye Mackay, who died in 1571, had a daughter "married to Alexander Davidson, one of the clan Gunn."

Sir Robert Gordon's royal commission against George Sinclair, the fifth earl of Caithness, was executed in September, 1623. On the 3rd of that month he marched with his army from Dunrobin Castle to Killernan in Strathully, the home of the McHamish, *alias* Gunn, which was a rendezvous for more troops. "There he divided his forces into several companies, and appointed commanders over each band. Next morning, having passed the river of Helmsdale, he arrayed his army. He sent a company of the clan Gunn to march half a mile continually before the host, to search the fields and to make clear the passages. John Murray of Abirscors, Hugh Gordon of Ballellon, and Adam Gordon of Kilcalmkill led the right hand wing; John Gordon of Embo, younger, Robert Gray of Opisdale, and Alexander Sutherland of Kilphedder had the command of the left wing. Sir Robert Gordon and his brother Sir Alexander, having with them the laird of Pulrossie and William McHamish or Gunn of Killernan, led the middle battle. The two wings advanced a little on either side, and were always to be supported from the middle battle as occasion should serve. In this manner they marched toward Berriedale, and kept the same order whilst they remained in Caithness." This glimpse of the Gunns as in the front, where courage was most needed, is characteristic. It is the latest view of them in their clan war-paint, Sir Robert's Zulu arrangement giving them the post of honour and danger, their chief evidently being his own dependence



in the centre, where command lay. Unfortunately for their historic fame, no fighting occurred.

Among the gentlemen who went as officers in Sir Donald Mackay's levy of 1628 to Germany were William Gunn, born in Garty in Sutherland, the son of John Gunn (Robson); John Gunn, the son of William Gunn in Golspie-Kirkton; and George Gunn, the son of Alexander Gunn (Robson), the burner of Sandside corn.

During this levying an incident of noise rather than importance took place. Angus Roy *alias* Gunn, "one of the Caithness clan Gunn," says Sir Robert, a soldier of Sir Donald's, had been guilty of some civil crimes for which Mackay had a warrant against him from the privy council. He was hiding near Helmsdale. Sir Donald sent a letter from Cromarty to John Sutherland of Clyne, enclosing the warrant for his apprehension; and another letter to Sir Alexander Gordon, the sheriff, to seize and send Gunn to him, no doubt to embark him thence to Germany. A conflict of jurisdictions ensued. Clyne with sixteen men took Angus Gunn from two of the sheriff's messengers who had captured him, and Duffus, the brother of Clyne, with 300 men, supported the action. The sheriff, on hearing of this gathering, collected 18 men, and coming to the bridge of Brora found the Sutherlands ranked in battle array at its east end. He demanded to see their commission for taking Angus from his men and holding him. Trying to cross the bridge to secure Gunn, "they let fly a volley of guns and arrows at him and his company," wounding two. The people of the district came to the aid of Sir Alexander Gordon, their sheriff, and he forced the bridge. After some hours of discussion, the Sutherlands gave up their prisoner, and the sheriff sent him to Cromarty to Sir Donald. A lawsuit against Clyne followed, who was imprisoned at Edinburgh, but reconciliation closed the affair. At Cromarty Gunn was delivered to Duffus, probably for some delinquency against him; but he was redelivered to Sheriff Gordon, who set him at liberty.

As usual, the historian makes this incident, which seems to have been

a mere accident of writing two letters on the same subject rather carelessly, a deep plot of Mackay to involve the Duffuses and the Gordons, and, of course, "God wrought wonderfully for the house of Sutherland against their enemies," Sir Donald sickening, the laird of Duffus dying in October, 1626, with other providential facilities to the divinely favoured Gordons; a more peculiar people than the Jews, if Sir Robert is to be believed. His continuator, Gordon of Sallach, says of him that he "was a bitter enemy so long as he professed it; choleric; but his eminent virtues overbalanced and obscured these vices." The greatest of all his virtues was that he wrote down contemporary events which would otherwise have been lost. His records, for all his superstition, prejudice, selfishness, and passion, bear a rich burden of extraordinary historic lore.

After the battle of Norlingin in 1634, Colonel William Gunn left Germany for France, going thence to England, arriving in London in December, 1634, on a visit to Sir Robert Gordon. Major-general of the holy Roman Empire, having served in the emperor's Italian and other wars, he and his heirs were created barons of the empire about 1648, the privileges of which were that in all imperial diets or sessions they had place and speech, they might purchase land in the empire, muster volunteers for levies, and answer charges at no civil or criminal court, but only in the imperial chamber. The imperial city of Ulm upon the Danube river, where he settled, the population of which is now 33,000, has a cathedral with the highest spire in the world, just finished. The building was long said to be large enough to receive all the people of the town at the same service.

#### NOVELISTS AND THE DANISH PRINCESS.

In John Galt's novel "The Entail," one of the characters, Donald Gunn, schoolmaster, Wick, tells the story of the Danish princess. Galt, in his "Autobiography," says he was never at Noss, but had his northern lore and sea-coast descriptions from Catherine Sinclair, the novelist, daughter of

Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster ; and she is therefore responsible for this :—

“In olden and ancient times the laird of Clyth went over to Denmark, and being at the court of Elsinour, counterfeited by the help of a handsome person and a fine elocution the style and renown of the most prosperous gentleman in all Caithness, by which he beguiled a prince of Copenhagen to give him his daughter in marriage, a lady of rare and surpassing beauty. After his marriage he returned to Scotland, to prepare for the reception of his gorgeous bride ; but when he beheld his own rude turret amidst the spray of the ocean’s sea, and thought of the golden palaces and sycamore gardens of Denmark, he was shocked at the idea of a magnificent princess inhabiting such a bleak abode, and overwhelmed with the dread of the indignation that his guilt would excite among her friends. So when the Danish man-of-war with the lady on board was approaching the coast, he ordered lights and fires along the cliffs of Ulbster, by which the pilots were bewildered, and the ship was dashed in pieces. The princess and her maids of honour, with many of the sailors, were drowned ; but her body was found beautiful in death, with rings on her fingers and gems in her ears ; and she was interred, as became a high-born lady of her breeding, in the vault where she now lies among the ancestors of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster. Ever since that time the castle of Clyth has been uninhabited ; and as often as the wind blows from the north-east, it is covered with a shroud, as if doing penance for the maiden of Denmark.”

Donald Gunn relates other events, not connected with his clan directly, especially some of those which happened at Girnigo Castle.

#### GIRNIGO AND DUNROBIN.

Girnigo, as legal and ruling centre, had during a long period great attraction for the Gunns, though Dunrobin Castle was afterwards their Mecca. Adam Gordon, earl of Sutherland, gave Strathully to John Sinclair, earl of Caithness, in 1516, “for assisting him against his enemies ;” and it continued in the possession of the earls of Caithness till George, the fifth earl of Caithness, exchanged it in 1608 for the tack of some church lands which the Earl of Sutherland held in Caithness, George paying 20,000 merks additional. Thus for 92 years all the Gunns, the McHamishes included, were eudally the men of the Caithness earls ; and the offices and berths at Girnigo had in consequence a large supply of the clan. See Sir Robert Gordon, pp. 89, 99. At Linlithgow, 2nd October, 1545, the queen-mother and

regent conceded under the great seal to John, Master of Caithness, son of George, the fourth earl, among other lands those of Helmsdale, Balnave-neuch, Suisgill, Dubol, Kildonan, Knockfinn, and Free, the very region of the McHamishes; as at Edinburgh, 14th July, 1527, James V. had confirmed them to John, the third earl, and his countess, Elizabeth Sutherland. That there were troubles with the Gunns when the superiority existed, is to be presumed from this section of a remission dated Edinburgh, 18th December, 1556, given to George, the fourth earl, by the queen-regent, "For transgressions in whatsoever manner done in the commission to the said Earl George by George, earl of Huntly, then lieutenant of the queen-regent in the north, conceded for pursuing and invading with fire and sword certain rebels of the clan Gunn and clan Mackay, and especially for the usurpation of the queen's authority in the treasonable seizure of Alexander McInroy Rannak and Innyng Kaird, and their slaughter, or others of the clan Gunn and clan Mackay, outside the tenor of the said commission, or of others whomsoever, within the bounds of Caithness and Strathnavernia, while the clan Gunn and clan Mackay were at the horn, and for the slaughter of Gorresoun, after he had been taken, by the said Earl George, though the mother of the king presented her mandate to seize him for the chief justiciary at Edinburgh, and for not fulfilling the general tenor of the royal commission," &c., &c. This seems to have been a mere question of jurisdictions, Earl George as justiciary of all Sutherland and Caithness acting perhaps a little too independently of the crown. The Gunns were evidently in trouble, most probably those of Kildonan. One of the charges in the remission was that by the earl's command Hugh Nielson in Strathully or Kildonan was slain in his house there, by Donald Gunn, *alias* Robson, a man of notorious violence, as has been seen. In a remission to George, the fifth earl, of date Holyrood, 19th May, 1585, Edward Jameson is mentioned as a servant of the said earl. His name shows him to have been one of the McHamishes of Killernan. James Manson was master of the horse at Girnigo then. This 1585 record

mentions George Manson and William Manson *alias* Rorison, both Gunns, as engaged, with many others, in the slaughters of David and Ingram Sinclair.

Nothing shows better the relation of the Gunns at that epoch to the Sinclairs than the supplication at Holyrood on 27th December, 1582, by George Keith (the earl-marshal), Lord Oliphant, and Robert Stuart, commendator of Deir and bishop of Caithness, the king's tenants of Ackergill, Oldwick, Berriedale, Borrowston, etc. They say that in April, 1567, George, earl of Caithness, was granted the justiciaryship of the whole diocese of Caithness, with unheard of powers, to the complainers' hurt, for 15 years till April, 1582, when his office was reduced by George, earl of Huntly, and Alexander, earl of Sutherland, on a decree of the lords of council and session. One of the powers given was that as justiciary he could make slaughters and harrings without consulting the crown, which explains various historical affairs like those of the Reay Dunbeaths, having the look but not the fact of illegality. The greatest personal point, as fully stated in the *Acta Parliamentorum Scotiæ*, was, "It is against the law of the country that he should judge all persons in Caithness, such as the earl-marshal of Scotland, the earl of Sutherland, the Lord Oliphant, and stop the earl of Huntly's jurisdiction, and also that of all the lairds in Caithness." King James VI. and the parliament, on no intelligible principles, all these powers being ordinary to such a regality as Earl George held hereditarily, abrogated his judicial commission. His successor, George, the fifth earl, though a minor at his predecessor's death, demanded his rights; and the supplication above was that he should not get them. "If," says the 'Register of Privy Council,' vol. III., "the justiciaryship is to be renewed in George, the fifth earl, now under age, they, the above-named, will lose their lands, and the clan Gunn and others occupy them." It is clear whose men the Gunns were at that period. The Oliphants had habitual clauses in the tacks or charters they gave that no Sinclair or Gunn could fall heir to them, and so come on their lands. It is the advance of

peaceful civilisation and law which has given a falsely sinister appearance to the earlier regality ruling, when it was impossible to compel the lieges to the royal obedience without such power as fire and sword added to the ordinary legal executive. The Gunns had much of the odium always attending the actual instruments of enforcing law, this duty being theirs by almost hereditary or accepted right on both sides of the Ord.

#### A BRANCH OF HENDERSONS.

Though it is not in the present scope to deal with the sub-clans of Gunn lineage, each of them being of importance enough to deserve separate treatment, it is necessary to illustrate page 93 within by quoting the following from the famous Black Book of Taymouth :—

“Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy in April, 1638, married his bastard sister, Mary Campbell, to a gentleman called John Henderson of Brabsterdorrnan, and bestowed on her for tocher, bridal, and bridal clothes, the sum of 4000 merks.”

Lord Glenorchy who fought the battle of Altimarlach in 1680 had therefore relatives in Caithness; and it is probable that the numerous official positions held by the Hendersons of Brabsterdorrnan, down to the late John Henderson, W.S., Ormlie Villa, Thurso, may be ascribed, directly or indirectly, to the favour of those Perthshire and Argyleshire Campbells, now represented by the Marquis of Breadalbane.

#### THE GUNN TARTAN AND BADGE.

The colours and set of the clan tartan are, according to Æneas Gunn, author of the MS. history, as follow :— $\frac{1}{2}$  inch green, 7 inches blue,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch green, 7 inches black, 7 green, 1 inch red, 7 inches green, 7 black,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch green, 7 inches blue, and 1 inch green. The rosewort was the badge, not the juniper, as Logan asserts in his “Scottish Gael.” At a recent London gathering of Gunns “the tables were artistically decorated with branches from the juniper, while each guest wore a sprig of the same tree. Some

had donned the clan dress." The honours of the dinner went to E. S. Gunn as editor of *The Journal of the Clan Gunn*, a quarterly started two or three years ago. The Rev. Alex. Gunn, Watten, in a letter of sympathy, pointed out that "Rognvald the Rich, earl of Moeria, Norway, who lived about 870, was the common ancestor of Queen Victoria and the clan Gunn; the former being a descendent of Rolf, the second son, and the latter from Einar, the fourth son of the earl." Such findings ought to whet the appetite for his principal unpublished MS. A Dr. Marcus Gunn asserted that the Rev. Alexander presented his father with another MS. history which traced the stock to Norse ancestors in 600. The letter, however, quoted on page vii. of the present preface, which makes 690 the beginning of an unbroken line of eldest sons, may be accepted as his final decision as to the rise of the clan. That he is by genius and enthusiasm the rightful historiographer of his people, the publication of his labours will no doubt demonstrate. But to return to the question of the badge. Charles Cameron of Glasgow, who has given great attention to the subject, favours *sedum rhodiola*, in other words, the roseroot. If these two authorities are right, the juniper must be avoided in celebration or decoration. "The roseroot," says J. F. Grant, "belongs to the stonecrop order, and commonly grows on rocks in alpine or subalpine situations. It is found fairly abundant on the seacliffs along the coasts of Sutherland and Caithness, where it is known as 'Lady's Footstool.'" Charles Cameron states that the Highlanders call it "The Heroes' Plant," and imagines that as this name is not applied to it beyond Scotland, the heroes may be the Gunns. Possibly one hero of the clan may have assumed it, or been associated with it in some way, and it is therefore "The Hero's Plant." Its situation on barren lofty rocks is also suggested as explanation of the heroic title. The juniper is known as a badge elsewhere, so it is out of court. That "The Heroes' Plant" belongs to the Gunns is hinted by the fact that their motto, "War or Peace," is the title of one of the most famous and difficult piobrachs of the Highlands, and Cameron thinks it a McRimmer

composition in honour either of the Gunns or of themselves, who had the same motto. But only Gaelic experts are competent to so intricate a discussion. It is of less abstruse interest to know that the pipers of the 79th Highlanders played the tune in the thick of the battle of Waterloo.

## REPRINTS.

## I.

The following is the agreement which threatened to exterminate the clan in retaliation of the victory snatched at Aldgown in 1586 :—

“At Girnigo, 16th June, ..... It is agreed by a noble and potent lord, George, earl of Caithness, taking the burden on him for his whole kin, dependents, and partakers whomsoever, on the one part, and Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindown, knight, taking the burden on him for a noble and potent lord, Alexander, earl of Sutherland, and the said Earl of Sutherland for himself, and taking the burden on him for his whole kin, friends, dependents, and partakers whomsoever, on the other part. Forasmuch as it is notoriously known to all men about the cruel, undutiful slaughter and murder committed in June, 1586, by those of the name of clan Gunn, upon the said George, earl of Caithness's special kinsmen, friends, and dependents, and about the said clan Gunn, the committers of the said slaughter, being his majesty's rebels, repairing and being daily received within the bounds of Caithness and Sutherland, to the great grief and contempt of the said Earl of Caithness, the same being greatly to his lordship's dishonour to behold, he has deliberated, with God's assistance, they being his majesty's rebels, as said is, to seek, seize, and pursue them, even to the death, wherever they, or any of them, may be apprehended. In the doing of this, the said noble and potent lord, Alexander, earl of Sutherland, by the mouth of the said Sir Patrick Gordon, promises faithfully, on his lordship's credit and honour, to concur, assist, and take plain pact by himself and his beforesaids, with the Earl of Caithness and his beforesaids, in the pursuit of the clan Gunn to the death. For the upright, true, and forward doing of this by the Earl of Sutherland and his beforesaids with the Earl of Caithness and his beforesaids, both the said earls are contented and faithfully promise to enter into special favour and goodwill with each other, and to convene and put their forces together between this and the end of the present month of June, and to pass forward to the pursuit of the clan Gunn, wherever they may be apprehended, and from this time forth both the said earls to



continue in friendship and amity for ever, and acts, quarrels, and chances whatsoever which have fallen out, or yet shall happen to fall out, between the earls or their dependents, to be remitted to and considered by the judgment of discreet and impartial friends within the diocese of Caithness or sheriffdom of Inverness, or any others who may be chosen by the said earls. For faithfully observing and keeping the premises both earls have subscribed these with their hands, the said Patrick having the burden on him, as said is, day, year, and place beforesaid, in the presence of witnesses, James Sinclair, Master of Caithness, and John Sinclair of Dunn solely. Signed, CAITHNESS; PATRICK GORDON of Auchindown; JAMES SINCLAIR, Master of Caithness, *witness*; JOHN SINCLAIR of Dunn, *witness*."

The defeat of the clan at Leckmeln, Loch Broom, soon after followed. See within, page 50. The *Miscellanea Scotia* says that in that Ross-shire battle of despair 32 Gunns were slain.

## II.

Several of the principal persons engaged about the Sandside corn-burning of 1615 appear in this letter by Lord Forbes:—

"To the right honourable his assured good friend, Sir Robert Gordon, tutor of Sutherland. Right honourable Sir,—Finding the opportunity of the bearer, your sister's son, the laird of Mackay, I thought good to make you aware of that which has passed between him and me concerning the clan Gunn, as likewise about his agreement with the Earl of Caithness. As for the agreement, I will suspend my judgment of it till time try the effect. But concerning the clan Gunn, I cannot know from Mackay that he has ill-will at any of them, except John Gunn *alias* Robson, who, as he alleges, deserves the same at his hands, as has been proved before yourself. He complains greatly to me that you have undertaken John's maintenance against him, and likewise that you have given Gunn the promise of land since his coming away. You know best yourself if these things are true. But this I will say, as an impartial friend who wishes well to both, that neither of you will do right in maintaining or defending any man against the other who is notoriously known to have caused just offence. I know from Mackay that he is most willing to keep duty in all respects to the house of Sutherland, provided that he has reciprocation for himself and his friends. You should be careful not to lose him, willingly or any other way; for you may take example by your neighbours what it is to be in trouble or variance with your own relatives without great reason. If Mackay breaks duty in any way to the house of Sutherland, you may be assured there shall not be a friend living who will be further against him than myself. He has likewise

been very pressing with me seeking a discharge to John Gunn, *alias* Robson, for the burning of the corn of Sandside. This I have granted on condition that John, according to his promise, shall deliver the three doers of that burning, as likewise find security that I and mine shall incur no harm from him and his in time to come. If he does not, I assure you that I will follow him to the uttermost for that deed, and for all other things which I can lay to his charge according to law. But the men being delivered and surety found, I will be a friend to John and all his till they deserve the contrary again. If you discern him making any subterfuge from doing that which the laws will compel him to do, I pray you to tell Mackay what answer he makes, that I may know his meaning soon. If he refuse, I doubt not that should you and Mackay agree to it, you may get the malefactors apprehended. I am sure you will both do this, as I have been and shall be ready to favour similarly either of you. If the wrong had been done to one or other which has been done to me, and the malefactors have been as often within my bounds as these men in yours, they would not have escaped condign punishment until now. As for a warrant to apprehend them, Mackay has a caption lying beside him in Strathnaver which can serve you both, as Mackay will inform you on meeting. I am told further that John Gunn, *alias* Robson, is very ill-disposed in his speeches against William Innes and others of my servants in Caithness. If this is true, it is a marvel to me, because I think John should be eager to make amends for bygones rather than incense me to further wrath against him. I remain (committing you, with My Lady your mother, with your bed-fellow, and with all your friends, wherever they are, to the love and favour of God), your assured good friend at your service, ARTHUR, LORD FORBES. Drimnor, 13th April, 1618."

## III.

A scroll in Sir Robert Gordon's hand-writing runs:—

"I, Arthur, Lord Forbes, assignee constituted with Sir Donald Mackay of Strathnaver, knight, by William Innes of Sandside, to the action of the burning of the corn at Sandside, which fact of burning was committed, as is alleged, by Alexander Gunn, *alias* Robson, and his accomplices, by these presents discharge and simply forgive Alexander thereof, and of all the things which may flow therefrom for ever; and I oblige myself that I shall never pursue Alexander Gunn for the same by law, directly or indirectly. Further, I pledge myself by the truth of an honest man, that I shall do my diligence and best endeavour to persuade William Innes of Sandside never to pursue Alexander for the fact of the burning, directly or indirectly; and that I shall influence William, as far as I can, to discharge Alexander thereof for ever. Further, I promise that neither myself, nor any other by my means, shall be the advocate's informer against

Alexander for the deed. For the greater security, I consent that these presents be registered in the books of council, to have the strength of a decree of the lords thereof, that letters of horning may pass thereon in a simple charge of ten days only. To this effect I constitute . . . . . my lawful procurators, &c. Written by Sir Robert Gordon, tutor of Sutherland. I have subscribed the same with my hand at . . . . the day of . . . . March, 1619."

Lord Forbes did not sign the doubtful document.

#### POSTSCRIPT.

Since the preface was written, most of the excellent materials of the appendix has had to be dealt with as new and additional. The value of the work has been so much increased by these unexpected historical finds, that the desire is to complete as far as possible with what is now known. Whether a future edition, with notes, especially on the early Norse events, might not be accepted as the sufficient annals of the Gunns, must be left to the decision of public opinion. Meantime, no available fragments must be lost, and nothing has more interest than some recent statements about the chieftaincy. The Rev. Alex. Auld writes, "It was the McHamish section of the clan that claimed the chieftainship for John Gunn of Hestigrow," the grandfather of himself and Rev. Alex. Gunn, Watten. On this statement Captain Gunn, Braehour, has published some remarkable facts :—

"It shows clearly that the clan had meetings on the chieftain business in Sutherlandshire, where they held courts of inquiry, and examined witnesses as to the rights of the different claimants to the chiefship. One of these courts was held in 1800 at Achnamore, in the parish of Kildonan, and was presided over by Thomas Gordon, who signed himself as 'J.P. and Magistrate.' Witnesses were examined by William Sinclair, writer, Thurso. Another court on the same business was held in the following year (1801) at Achnahud, where witnesses were examined regarding the rights of two claimants. One of these failed to show his pedigree of descent, and the other was proved by witnesses to be descended from George Gunn, Corrish, brother of Alexander, chief of the clan, who was said to have died in Sutherlandshire in 1763, but was shown at this examination to have died in the year 1762. The claimant was proved to be of illegitimate descent of the said George Gunn of Corrish, so it appeared the

claims of both these claimants fell to the ground. Relative papers are still extant."

The captain says that the law as to chieftainship was that "any person who was found to gainsay or ignore the rights of the chief after they had been legally established, was to be burnt by a hot iron on right cheek." He is too absolute about legality, his opponents might contend. Undoubtedly chieftaincies came to follow the feudal fashion of succession in the later period of the clan system, but this passage from a new volume on Ireland may moderate the contests by pedigree which are rampant:—"Primogeniture, regarded by all lawyers trained under the feudal system as the very basis of inheritance, was simply unknown. Even in the case of the chieftain, his rights belonged only to himself, and before his death a re-election took place, when some other of the same blood, not necessarily his eldest son, or even his son at all, but a brother, first cousin, uncle, or whoever stood highest in the estimation of the clan, was nominated as tanist or successor, and received promises of support from the rest." This was not very far from popular election. That the punishment of disloyalty should have been severe is not out of keeping where so much uncertainty was the rule.

Of the John Gunn mentioned on page 99 within, many details are given by "Rab" in his *Horæ Subsecivæ*. He was for a long time body-servant and purse-bearer to the Moirs of Stoneywood, near Aberdeen. "Though poor, he had come of gentle blood, the Gunns of Ross-shire. He went into the army, from which, his Highland pride being wounded by some affront, he deserted, and joined a band of roving gipsies called Cairds. His strength and courage soon made him captain of his baud, which for years levied black mail over the county of Aberdeen. Tiring of his gipsy life, he entered Stoneywood's service, retaining, however, his headship of the Cairds, and using this often in Robin Hood fashion generously for his friends." Young Grant of Ballindalloch needed twelve men to complete his

company for Dutch service, and Gunn being asked to prevent failure promptly put the number from his gipsies on the quay at Aberdeen the day of sailing. Moir of Stoneywood, taking John with him to Londou, "visited his friend the Earl of Winton, then under sentence of death in the Tower for his concern in the rebellion of 1715. The earl was arranging his affairs, and the family books and papers had been allowed to be carried into his cell in a large hamper, which went and came as occasion needed. John, who was a man of immense size and strength, undertook, if the earl put himself instead of his charters into the hamper, to take it under his arm as usual, and so he did, walking lightly out. Lord Winton retired to Rome, where he died in 1749. On the rising in 1745, Gunn joined his master's son." When Colonel Moir fled to Sweden, John Gunn "took to his ancient courses, was tried, found guilty this time, and closed his life in Virginia," or the plantations, transportation being to America then as afterwards to Botany Bay. He had once before been tried before the circuit court of Aberdeen as a robber, but had an acquittal through the efforts of the Stoneywood laird. His wife was a gipsy, and greatly aided the Jacobites by carrying letters and money in their proscribed times.

A subject which awaits the discussion of the greatest authority on the early genealogy of the Gunns, is touched by a correspondent of the editor of the *Clan Gunn Journal*, published in London :—

"The marriage of Ragnild, the heiress of the Norse earls, and Guyn or Gunni, the ancestor of clan Gunn, took place about 1196. There were two Guyns, one the son of Olaf and elder brother of Sweyn, and the other the son of Andres, the son of Sweyn, the son of Olaf. At the time of Ragnild's marriage, Guyn Olafson must have been nearly 100 years old, for his younger brother-Sweyn, in 1159 or 1160, called himself to Earl Harold 'an old man;' and shortly before then Guyn Olafson made a sort of left-handed marriage with the Dowager Countess of Athol, and we hear no more of him. From a very careful comparison of dates, the husband of Ragnild must have been the younger Guyn Andresen. Sweyn had a son, Olaf, by his first wife, the heiress of Freswick and Buchollie; and a son, Andres, by his second wife, a wealthy lady

of the Isle of Man. Andres married a sister of Bishop Bjarni, and their son was Guyn or Gunni. Their father's great wealth was divided between them. An Icelandic pedigree of the earls says Ragnild married Gunni Andresen, and their son was Snaekoll Gunnisen, the first Gunn who came to Caithness."

This novel view is said to be founded on careful research, but it is enough for the present to indicate a theory which would make all the Gunns to be Swansons.

*THE END.*

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